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SANSKRIT DRAMA: ITS ORIGIN AND DECLINE

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J. GONDA et H. W. OBBINK

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I. SHEKHAR

SANSKRIT DRAMA: ITS ORIGIN AND DECLINE

LEIDEN
E. J. BRILL
1960

Śiva the Naṭarāja

Courtesy: State Museum, Amsterdam

SANSKRIT DRAMA: ITS ORIGIN AND DECLINE

BY

I. SHEKHAR

M.A., M.O.L., D.Litt., Shastri

ICCR Professor of Indology and Sanskrit University of Tehran: Iran

Sometimes Professor of Sanskrit at the Maharaja's College, Jaipur, India.

LEIDEN

E. J. BRILL

1960

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TO

Indu my wife
My happiness and life

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FOREWORD

During the course of the last seventy years the problem of the origin of Sanskrit drama has been mainly studied and tackled from the angle of the Aryan supremacy. The researches made in the field revolved around the data of the dialogue hymns, the Vedic ritual, the post-Vedic and epic literatures, the supposed foreign influence and the influence of the Prākrit languages. The results emanating from the discussions though often divergent, proved helpful in narrowing the gaps to a considerable degree. However, none of the views expressed could explain satisfactorily the issues of the origin and decline of the drama in India. The aim of the present work is to examine the problem from a hitherto neglected angle. The study offered could by no means be claimed as exhaustive. It is only a fresh approach suggesting new lines along which further researches in the field may be advantageously directed.

Indians like all other people of the world are susceptible to flattery. When the early European scholars glorified the role of the Aryan race in the evolution of the Indian culture, their views naturally filled the Indian mind with admiration. The scholars in East and West accepted it as an established fact, which in course of years developed into a fixed belief, so much so that the investigations supporting the claims of the non-Aryans in the evolution of Hindu culture were resented by the orthodox and were characterised as rank heresy because fixed notions always die hard. However, the discovery of the Indus Valley Civilization threw a challenge to the earlier concepts and gave a definite set-back to the theory of the Aryan supremacy by shifting the emphasis in favour of the non-Aryans. Gradually it was revealed and acknowledged that the contribution of the non-Aryan population was neither insignificant nor could be neglected any further.

Although there are many treatises dealing with some salient features of the Sanskrit drama, very rarely authors have focused attention on the factors which might have led to the early decay of the drama in India. While some of the causes of this decay are commonly found in the general decline of Sanskrit literature, there were presumably some inherent factors which retarded its growth from the very inception. During the course of my long teaching career, I have often marvelled as to why the Sanskrit drama failed to develop into a powerful stage

which could leave a legacy to the dramatic literature of the modern Indian vernaculars. Apparently there must have been some patent factors, which I have tried to spotlight in the following chapters of this book. I shall consider the attempt amply rewarded if it helps in removing the prevailing prejudices by stimulating proper interest in this branch of Sanskrit literature.

There remains now the pleasant task of offering sincere thanks where thanks are due. My foremost duty is to offer thanks to the Ministry of Education of Her Majesty's Government in the Netherlands for their help and hospitality, to the University of Tehran and the Indian Council for Cultural Relations, New Delhi, for permission to leave the station, to the librarians of the University of Utrecht and of the Kern Institute, Leyden, for loan of books, to the State Museum, Amsterdam and the Press Section of the Embassy of India at the Hague, for lending photographs, to Dr. and Mrs. Sukul, *my hosts in Utrecht, to Mrs.* C. Breuning *for going through the entire manuscript and for suggesting several valuable corrections, to Miss* H. Wijnholt *for assisting me in making the manuscript ready for the press and in finding out several references, to Mr.* A. van der Veen *for explaining to me some articles in Dutch. I also wish to record my sincere appreciation to a friend who corrected the proofs but prefers to remain anonymous.*

I have great pleasure in recording my indebtedness to all those scholars past and present, whose works stimulated my interest in this task. I owe a great deal to Lévi, Keith, Gonda, De, Chatterji, Ghosh and Pusalkar *whose works I have frequently consulted. However, I must relieve them of the responsibility of any particular view advanced, as the opinions and the judgements, as well as the shortcomings, are my own.*

Finally I acknowledge my deep gratitude to Professor Dr. J. Gonda *for his constant interest, encouragement and guidance; he not only helped me in completing these chapters but also gave me a method, which would always stand me in good stead.*

In conclusion I would express the hope that the publication of this book will not only stimulate, but also provoke further investigations in the field with an open mind entirely free from prejudices and any pre-conceptions.

UTRECHT, INDU SHEKHAR
1st October, 1960.

ABBREVIATIONS

AID	Über die Anfänge des indischen Dramas, Munich, 1914.
AV	Atharvaveda
BNS	Bhāratīya Nāṭyaśāstra, Seth Govindadas Commemoration Volume, Delhi, 1956.
BSO(A)S	Bulletin of the School of Oriental (and African) Studies, London.
DR	Daśarūpa
DSL	Drama in Sanskrit Literature, Bombay, 1947.
G.O.S.	Gaekwad Oriental Series, Baroda.
HC	Hindu Civilization, Bombay, 1950.
HIL	History of Indian Literature, Vol. 1, Calcutta, 1927.
HSL	History of Sanskrit Literature, Oxford, 1948.
	History of Sanskrit Literature, Calcutta, 1947.
HSP	History of Sanskrit Poetics, Bombay, 1951.
IAC	Indo-Asian Culture, Quarterly Journal of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations, New Delhi.
IAH	Indo-Aryan and Hindi, Ahmedabad, 1942.
IATC	Indo-Aryan Thought and Culture, New York, 1926.
ID	Das indische Drama, Berlin, 1920.
IT	The Indian Theatre, Banaras, 1954.
IVA	India in the Vedic Age, Lucknow, 1956.
JAOS	Journal of the American Oriental Society.
JASB	Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.
JRAS	Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland.
K.M.	Kāvyamālā Series, Bombay.
KSS	Kāshi Sanskrit Series.
Mah. BH.	Mahābhāṣya.
Māl.	Mālavikāgnimitra.
MBH	Mahābhārata.
MSIA	Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization, New York, 1953.
MM	Mālatīmādhava.
MR	Mudrārākṣasa.
Mṛcch.	Mṛcchakaṭika.
MVC	Mahāvīracarita.
NS	Nāṭyaśāstra.
N.S.P.	Nirṇaya Sāgara Press, Bombay.
Rat.	Ratnāvalī.
ṚV	Ṛgveda.
Sāh.D.	Sāhityadarpaṇa.
Śak.	Śakuntalā.
SBAW	Sitzungsberichte der Königl. Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin.
SD	The Sanskrit Drama, Oxford, 1924.
SHSP	The Studies in the History of Sanskrit Poetics, London, 1923.
S.Ind.	Sanskrit in Indonesia, Nagpur, 1952.
SIIFE	The South Indian Influence in the Far East, Bombay, 1949.

SV	Sāmaveda.
TE	Theatre in the East, New York, 1956.
TI	Le théatre indien, Paris, 1890.
TOM	The Other Mind, A Study of Dance and Life in South India, London, 1953.
TSS	Trivandrum Sanskrit Series.
URC	Uttararāmacarita.
VA	The Vedic Age, London, 1952.
VOJ	Vienna Oriental Journal.
YV	Yajurveda.
ZDMG	Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft.

INTRODUCTION

> "Whenever and wherever the humans have progressed beyond the mere struggle for existence, to gods, recreation and self-expression, there has been theatre in some sense" [1].

It is not easy to trace the exact point of the evolution of the theatre, which is hidden deep in diverse forms and confused accounts. This is an art which is considered a meeting ground of all arts [2] and as such it is very sensitive to scientific investigation. Call it divine or human, religious or social, spiritual or secular, it is organically related to the human impulses and emotions, which give rise to all our movements and gestures. We admit our helplessness in determining as to how and when the dramatic instinct took concrete form, but it is fairly certain that the achievement began with the primitive dances of our ancestors. For all over the world primitive men dance where the cultured pray. The cultured express their admiration by kneeling down and saying prayers whereas the primitive demonstrate their admiration through dance. LUCIAN, expressing gratitude to Eros Protogonos, says [3]: "It would seem that dancing came into being at the beginning of all things and was brought to light together with Eros, that ancient one, for we see this primeval dancing clearly set forth in the chord dance of the constellations and in the planets and fixed stars, their interchanging, intervening and orderly harmony". Not only did drama as such arise out of the primitive dance, but it is quite probable that recited poetry too was born after the marriage of dance with gestures.

As such dance is the earliest outlet for emotion and the cradle of all arts. Civilized people express their emotions through well-regulated actions, while primitive people developed the art of expression through well-regulated movements of their bodies [4].

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[1]) SHELDON CHENEY, *Theatre: Three thousand Years*, New York (1952), Introduction.

[2]) Compare KĀLIDĀSA, in *Mālavikāgnimitra*, Act I, 4.

[3]) Quoted by A. K. COOMARASWAMI, in *Dance of Śiva*, New York (1948), pp. 66-67.

[4]) MULKARAJ ANAND, *Indian Theatre*, London, pp. 3-4.

When early man addressed the gods in dance, by no means all his activities were dramatic, but the germ of drama was present there in a potential form. That explains why dance and drama owe their origin to the same root (*nṛt-*) in Sanskrit and that the theatre is still called a 'dancing house' in Cambodia [1]).

Thus dance is a great mother of art, religion and erotics [2]). She, perhaps, tore herself away as soon as she noticed her child, drama, capable of standing on its own legs. It is no use speculating as to when and where she landed first. She came to mankind in a hundred forms and at a hundred places. All we know is that as soon as the curtain of obscurity is lifted historic man emerges already possessed of a certain degree of culture and civilized customs. And the moment he steps into light, he brings dance and dramatic recital with him.

In spite of the irreparable loss of literature, traditions and authentic records, there are proofs available which show that the universal pursuits of dance and music were ever present in India in some form. The excavations at Mohenjodaro and Harappa have yielded conclusive proofs of the existence of classical dance styles, practised over 5000 years ago [3]). The frescoes at Ajanta and at several other places are only late illustrations of an early heritage obscured by the thin veil of centuries. It may not be possible to discover and regularize all the missing links, but in India gods and their creation both danced from the dawn of civilization. It is again possible that the Indus Valley Civilization may be a late chapter in the history of dancing in India, but the fact remains that from a remote antiquity down to the present age, an uninterrupted stream of dance and drama themes has flowed through the Vedic, Epic and Classical periods. The hypnotism of this art was so great that god Śiva danced for creation and destruction, Viṣṇu in the garb of the danseuse Mohinī seduced Śiva, Kṛṣṇa the great darling of the lovely milkmaids, danced with them in rapture. Śiva's spouse as Pārvatī danced tenderly, as Caṇḍī she produced the dreadful. It appears that Śiva's family was steeped in the glorious traditions of dance; he himself was Lord of dances, *Naṭa-rāja*—the king of actors. This cosmos is his theatre and he himself was the actor and his own audience.

1) CHENEY, *Theatre*, p. 12.
2) G. VAN DER LEEUW, *In den hemel is eenen dans*, Amsterdam (1930), p. 16.
3) See A.D. PUSALKAR, in *The Vedic Age*, London (1952), pp. 180-81.

The Sanskrit drama is seemingly the result of these glorious time-honoured traditions.

Ever since Sir WILLIAM JONES presented his first translation of Śakuntalā to the western world, European scholars evinced a keen interest in the evolution of Sanskrit drama. It may be admitted that some of them despite their limited vision, their conservative attitude, and their narrow field of information discussed the problem of drama in several independent treatises and articles. Their names are legion, but the outstanding scholars are PISCHEL, HERTEL, LÉVI, LÜDERS, RIDGEWAY, HILLEBRANDT, KONOW, WILSON, MACDONELL, WEBER, KEITH, GRAWONSKY and WINTERNITZ. But the problem of the origin of drama is only one of those many problems of Sanskrit literature, which due to the acute paucity of factual material, has baffled the savants both in East and West. However, it must be admitted, in all fairness, that while western scholars are on occasion inclined to underestimate the achievements of the Sanskrit dramatists, the Indian opinion often sees nothing but perfection in this branch of literature. While honest differences of opinion are normal in the field of scholarship, biased views not only blur the vision but render incalculable harm to the subject under discussion. Among the wellknown names LÉVI, KONOW, HILLEBRANDT and KEITH in the West, DE, RAGHAVAN, JAGIRDAR and GHOSH in India have all made sincere efforts to assess the achievements of the Hindu dramatists. However, the lamentable fact is that very few have tried to evaluate the debit side. Rarely have attempts been made to investigate the causes responsible for the decline of Sanskrit drama. Still more intriguing is the uniform silence, scholars with a few exceptions [1]) have maintained on the possibility of any pre-Aryan origin of the drama.

It is a pity that while the synthetic nature of Indian culture is universally recognized, traditional fixed notions and our colossal indifference have always stood in the way of an honest evaluation of the respective shares of the Aryan and non-Aryan races in the composite Hindu culture. In India, the North and South representing the Aryan and the Dravidian cultures are fairly critical of each other. Both have developed complexes which sometimes stand in the way of mutual appreciation and undermine the national

[1]) See M. M. GHOSH, *History of Indian drama, Its Origin and Diffusion*, Calcutta (1957), pp. 3-4.

solidarity. Therefore, it is proposed to focus attention on such neglected aspects of Indian culture as have reacted effectively in the evolution of drama in ancient India.

It is amazing that the Indian Drama, which had taken a definite shape and form around or before the beginning of the Christian era, failed to bloom to its fuller form as judged from the modern concepts of dramaturgy. Despite a promising beginning, a vigorous outlook and a characteristically special technique of its own, the drama maintained a status quo, which did not allow it to develop into a popular form of recreation. Was it a still-born child or did it die a premature death caused by lack of proper nourishment in its teething period? Are the reasons common to the general decline of Sanskrit poetry and literature or did it fall victim to certain causes which were exclusively related to this branch of literature? Perhaps the fact that classical Sanskrit drama arose in, and was meant for, a limited refined circle and consequently remained there, while all the time the other classes may have had their own modes of dramatic performances, has something to do with this decline.

At this remote distance, it may not be possible to present a satisfactory picture of pre-Aryan India, but in the light of recent researches in the fields of ethnology, epigraphy, linguistics, archaeology and anthropology the synthetic aspect of Hindu culture is gradually being revealed. It is generally accepted now in India and abroad that the fundamental principles of Indian civilization are based on a harmony of contrasts, crystallized in the synthesis of a unity in diversity [1]. Perhaps, in the intermingling of material cultures, religious or social cults based on an attitude of acceptance and general understanding, it finds no parallel elsewhere. In the infancy of Indological Studies naturally most scholars favoured the hypothesis of a highly cultured Aryan race as a great civilizing force in India. It had become a fashion to paint the original inhabitants as dark-skinned barbarians, who were supposed to have been overrun by the superior white race of the Aryans, fostering the sublime ideals of a superior culture. "It was presumed that all that was great and good and characteristic in Indian culture was evclved by the civilized Aryans; and whatever was dark and

[1] S. K. CHATTERJI, *Indian Synthesis: Racial and Cultural Inter-mixture in India*, in Indo-Asian-Culture 4, New Delhi (1954), p. 331.

degrading and superfluous, was supposed to have been the contribution of the suppressed non-Aryan mentality" [1]).

As the Aryans formed an important branch of the Indo-European family, this picture flattered the vanity of Europeans and that of educated Indians, for the latter gloried in the distinction of being descendants of a conquering race. The Vedic and Classical Sanskrit Literature supported it and the slavish native mentality because of the paucity of facts, and because of ingrained prejudices, regarded it as authentic. So much so "it was considered rank heresy to question the superiority of Aryans in any walk of life" [2]). However, further investigations revealed the sharp differences existing between the old Aryan and the Dravidian worlds. The question of Dravidian contribution to Indian culture engaged the attention of scholars, in the light of which the pre-Aryan state of affairs in India did not look as dark and gloomy as pictured before. It became more and more apparent that the credit of evolving the Indian culture is to be shared by two or more racial groups. In the domains of art, literature, religion, customs and philosophy, the Dravidian traits became more noticeable. Finally the excavations at Mohenjodaro, Harappa, etc. tilted the scale in favour of some Pre-Aryan civilization, now widely known by the name of Indus-Valley Civilization. The recent excavations at Lothal and Rangpur have confirmed the existence of a wide-spread pre-Aryan civilization.

Undoubtedly, the discovery of ancient cities and the excavations yielded valuable information regarding the antiquity of an old, well-developed Pre-Aryan civilization, but it also complicated the problem. Most scholars subscribed to the theory of the arrival of a Negrito or Negroid race in about 3500 B.C., which spread over to North India, and who along with their cities fell victim to subsequent invasions of the Aryans. The survivors were forced to cross over to the South of India, speaking Tamil and other Dravidian languages, while a few became mixed up with the Mongoloid Nagas of Assam province, in the North-East of India. The Czech scholar HROZNÝ offered quite a different theory calling the builders of Sindh and Punjab culture '*Proto-Indians*', and connecting them with the Hittites of Asia Minor, who, according to him, were

[1]) S. K. DE, *Beginning of Indian Civilization*, IAC, Jan. (1956), p. 262.
[2]) B. HROZNÝ, *Histoire de l'Asie Antérieure*, Paris (1947), English translation, Prague (1953). Also CHATTERJI, IAC, 4 (1954), p. 332.

destroyed by the Dravidians arriving from the N.-West of Asia. They remained in possession of the country till the arrival of the conquering race of Aryans [1]). Whatever may be the merits of the theory, the fact remains that prior to the arrival of the Aryans, India had a race of city-dwelling, artistic, prosperous and cultured people, who were great traders and indulged freely in the pleasures of life. These people had established traditions of a three-horned dancing god and a shapely goddess and have left a statuette of a nude dancing girl in an alluring pose. These early inhabitants were rich in traditional folklore, and believed in a matriarchal system, in sharp contrast to the Brahmanical system which in later times did not hesitate to bracket the Brahman women-folk with the low-born Śūdras. Most probably, it was in these environments of dance, music and other recreations that the first seedlings of drama sprouted.

When LÉVI, KEITH and KONOW published the results of their long investigations, the unsuspected chapter of Indus-Valley civilization had not yet revealed a fresh field of research. Headed by MAX MÜLLER, all earlier savants sang the songs of Aryan supremacy and traced the origin of Sanskrit Drama in the rich Vedic lore. A few casual and far-flung references relating to dance and music and dialogue hymns of the Ṛgveda supplied the only data, on which the theory of the origin of drama was built and amplified. BHARATA's testimony of a divine origin was employed in favour of a religious beginning for drama. There was another group of scholars which favoured a secular or a popular origin. Some of the early scholars were quick to notice a Greek influence in the origin and development of drama. But due to a single-track psychology, they could never divert attention from the hypothetical and overdrawn picture of Aryan glory. It must however be conceded that sixty or seventy years ago nobody could have imagined that the pre-historic Dravidians could have played an important role in the evolution of Indian culture. It was natural for Indo-European scholars to be influenced by the discovery of the Indo-European 'parent language' and the achievements of the ancient Indo-European peoples.

[1]) See J. E. VAN LOHUIZEN-DE LEEUW, *De Protohistorische Culturen van Voor-Indië*, Inaugural Address Amsterdam (1960).

Unfortunately, no authentic records of a Pre-Aryan Dravidian literature have come down to us. There are some dim, obscure and scanty traditions of sage Agastya preserved in the early Tamil literature, who is alleged to have established the first Brahmanical monastery in the South and was perhaps the first to win the Daṇḍakāraṇya region of the South for the Aryans [1]). There are a few myth-makers who take back the origin of Tamil literature to an early antiquity of about 2500 years before Christ, for which there are no proofs. The beginning of the Sangam Age can reasonably be placed round about 500-600 B.C. [2]). It is assumed that in the process of Aryanization the great traditions of TAMIL literature were obscured if not altogether lost. But miraculously enough the family traditions of dance, music and drama survived the act of proselytization, for which the arts and artistes both had to pay a heavy price in subsequent periods.

According to Mr. HEWITT [3]) who had the occasion to live fairly long in the Dravidian-inhabited areas of the South, when the Aryans arrived first in Punjab, the region of the seven rivers was populated by the timid, dwarfish, black-skinned and flat-nosed tribe of the wild Kols of whom the Aryans made a swift and clean sweep. Prof. VAN LOHUIZEN [4]) and HEINE-GELDERN [5]) independently arrive, more or less, at the same conclusion. This view is ably supported by Mr. SHILOTRI [6]), who maintains that the Aryans were quite lucky in not encountering the Dravidians first, but clashed with a less cultured and weak tribe of the Kols, who were pushed there earlier by the mighty Dravidians. If the circumstances had been otherwise, the history of the Vedic people would have been written in a different vein. However, the references in the Ṛgveda show that the Aryans had to put up a strong fight to establish themselves before they pressed further. This initial victory over Dāsas made the invaders bolder and they advanced

[1]) NILAKANTA SASTRI, *History of South India*, Oxford (1955), pp. 66-75.
[2]) See Chapter vi, p. 94, fn. 4.
[3]) J. F. HEWITT, *Primitive Traditional History*, I, London (1907), pp. 218-40.
[4]) VAN LOHUIZEN-DE LEEUW, Inaugural Address, pp. 26-27.
[5]) See also R. HEINE GELDERN, *The Coming of the Aryans and the End of the Harappa Civilization*, Man, Vol. LVI, Oct. 1956, pp. 136-40.
[6]) P. S. SHILOTRI, *Indo-Aryan Thought and Culture*, New York (1926), pp. 29-30.

eastward subjugating and ousting the Dravidians and other inhabitants from the mainland.

Being a nomadic, pastoral and hardy race, the Aryans prevailed over the native population. They had to fight a fierce battle, because they had nowhere to retreat. But shrewd as they were, they soon realized that the numerically superior and well-organised Dravidians could neither be annihilated nor enslaved in toto. Fully fortified in their strongholds, the non-Aryans were in possession of a better material civilization. Therefore, in order to subjugate the aboriginal population, the Aryans may have adopted and encouraged a three-fold policy of conquering, colonizing and civilizing the people. But to keep their own purity of blood and sacredness of culture, they had to adopt a class-system culminating in the four-fold division of castes, which proved a bane to the social and political life of India in succeeding ages. It is doubtful if these measures were at all successful in maintaining any purity in those days of active fusion. Despite several safeguards the two races came nearer, but not before laying the foundation of a system, which continues to thwart social, political and cultural progress to this day.

It is generally admitted that the original basis for class-distinction was embodied in the colour complex, according to which *Ārya* or *Dāsa*, *Ārya* or *Anārya* were divided on a racial basis. This division of white and black, masters and servants, conquerors and conquered, is a usual feature of the history of mankind the parallel of which is found in the Americans and the Negroes, the Europeans and the Indians. However, soon after the Aryan expansion and the inevitable process of fusion, the emphasis probably shifted from racial superiority to privileges of heredity and birth. As a result of this distinction, impassable barriers were created and, in accordance with existing conventions of the Aryan polity, the serving class was treated as inferior. Thus, the original grouping intended to advance political ambitions, was transformed into hereditary, legal and exclusive divisions.

Once this supremacy was established, the *Brāhmaṇa* was considered expert in all religious matters, which also gave him spiritual supremacy. It was in this undisputed capacity that the *Brāhmaṇa* and the Brāhmaṇical Law attained all-round importance [1]) and

[1]) *Ibid.*, pp. 50, 58.

wielded unparalleled influence over art, literature and society. What is still more amazing is the submissiveness of intelligent Aryans and energetic Dravidians to this system, which affected the entire course of social and political life in India. Unfortunately, the Sanskrit drama came under its baneful influence at that infant age and was almost treated as a stepchild with characteristic disdain and disfavour.

Though, the Dravidians and Pre-Aryans may be regarded as forerunners in dance and drama traditions, the Sanskrit drama took a definite and concrete form under the influence of epics. For theme, plot, characters, and recitation it mainly depended on the two epics even after its decline. However, as the artistes and some of the earliest dramatists in all probability hailed from the non-Aryan stock, the priests who were also custodians of law and morality, adopted a stiff attitude. Probably, in the early days of Aryanization, the rhapsodists employed for reciting the epics cared more for liturgical and religious aspects. But in the course of years the liturgical touch disappeared and it was replaced by the dramatic element, in which the services of professionals were freely employed. This was not found to be in harmony with the nature of the Brahmanical pattern of society and they relegated these pursuits to an inferior position. It may be assumed that the *Brāhmaṇas* censured the dance-drama traditions when it clashed with their ideas and ideals. This priestly disapproval is not a feature confined to India. Whether in Asia or Europe the church has always reacted to the friendship of dance and drama [1]. It may however be made clear that the remarks about the priestly disapproval of drama are not intended to hurt the feelings of any section of the society as the author himself belongs to a respectable Brāhmaṇa family of the North, famous for its traditional learning in Sanskrit.

In their enthusiasm to maintain purity of blood they deprived the young infant of mother-milk which, in course of time stunted its growth. Born of pre-Aryan parentage, brought up by epic traditions, the Sanskrit drama along with its component parts of music and dancing could not breath free air in a predominantly Brāhmaṇical atmosphere. No wonder its limbs did not receive proper nourishment because the Śūdras or Dravidians neither had

[1]) Van der Leeuw, *In den hemel is eenen dans*, p. 36.

the means not the influence to help its growth. Although in the atmosphere of the courts the drama continued it is doubtful if *Kṣatriyas* and *Vaiśyas* had any say in the matter for they completely relied on the injunctions of the *Brāhmaṇas*. The post-Vedic civilization did not permit a vigorous and joyous attitude of life to continue and was soon replaced by a stern, austere order, believing in a kill-joy culture. In its early phases, while Jainism preached the doctrine of elevating the soul by self-mortification, Buddhism subscribed to a cult of a life of negation. As late as in Aśoka's time, festivals and assemblies encouraging music and dance and other forms of recreation were banned because His Imperial Majesty regarded these assemblies as breeding grounds of unhealthy traditions. Thus, unlike the Greek theatre the Hindu drama could not develop into a popular people's art, as a result of which it did not inspire the people to build up a popular stage.

While people in the West believed in life, affirmed life and threw themselves with resolution into the undertakings of life, the élite in India under orthodox influence were completely engrossed in religious and esoteric doctrines, advocating a life of denial. The leaders took pride and delight in regarding this life as a mere passage to the next world and showed little interest in the world around. Due to this supreme indifference and class prejudice, the drama developed an artificial character, drifting away from reality, and looked more to court patronage. It is a wellknown fact that the art which removes itself from the habitual and natural environments, strikes at the very roots which supply it with necessary nourishment.

The traditional account of a divine origin, furnished by BHARATA, is enveloped in a mystic garb where legendary fabrications make the entire account look like a tribute to the authority of *Śāstra*. It wears an encyclopaedic character similar to the Mahābhārata, where the possible and impossible, natural and supernatural fact and fiction, gyrate in a peculiar manner. In spite of the hoary antiquity claimed for dramaturgy, the factual evidence in the extant literature does not warrant the claim. It is striking indeed, that we have no direct or indirect reference to the existence of drama in early Aryan texts before PĀṆINI. While enumerating different branches of study the Chāndogya-Upaniṣad omits both

dramaturgy and poetics [1]. A comparatively later authority like YĀJÑAVALKYA [2] enumerates 32 branches of study which are further developed into 64 branches in the Viṣṇupurāṇa, but no reference to drama finds a place there. It would however be preposterous to presume that there were no dramas before AŚVAGHOṢA. Similarly, it would be ridiculous to think that the Indian drama suddenly appeared in a developed form from nothing and that there were no popular theatrical performances of some crude form which supplied the literary dramatist with basic material.

Several attempts have been made to prove the existence of theatres in ancient India, but in the absence of any convincing evidence it is doubtful if anything of the kind ever existed beyond the halls and galleries attached to royal palaces. The father of Indian dramaturgy claimed that drama was intended to be a universal (*Sarva-vārṇikam*) art, but there is no conclusive evidence of a people's stage, much less of theatrical halls. The isolated example of the Jogīmāra caves in the Rāmgarh district of Chota Nāgpur still gives rise to vexed controversy. At best it appears to be a small place which might have been used for dance and music performances from time to time. The inscription found in the cave only avows the love of an artist for another artist and does not refer to any performance or theatre.

The writers on dramaturgy and poetics do not seem to have had any practical experience of stagecraft, but they multiplied the treatises and handbooks following the footsteps of BHARATA. Their love for descriptions and details is unending and so is the recondite erudition, which left nothing to chance. But most amazing is the submissiveness of the poets who seldom show any signs of rebellion against the overpowering tendency of depriving the littérateur of his legitimate freedom. The Hindu mind was cast in a mould which readily submitted to the injunctions of the Śāstras, be it in the sphere of religion, art or science. Deviations from the normal course were not always the result of any wilful breach, but were inadvertent, as none could possibly conform to all the requirements. It goes to the credit of a few eminent dramatists that despite these strict restrictions they could produce a few masterpieces of rare merit. The role of convention is great in moulding the course of

[1] *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, VII, 1, 2.
[2] *Yājñavalkya Saṃhitā*, I. 1, 3; 2, 45; 5, 100.

literature, but a creative mind is always sensitive to dictates, under which the genius refuses to function normally. In the words of a great thinker 'Nothing is so inimical to the artiste's creative gift as a civilization that, instead of discarding inherited standards of tastes, preserves certain vestiges of traditional sense of style, unsupported by the imaginative vitality that gives taste and sense of style their true aesthetic value' [1]).

How far the growth of Prākrits and modern vernaculars affected the development of drama, could only be ascertained by a close study of these languages. Buddhism resorted to the use of *Ardha-Māgadhī* and *Pāli* because those were people's languages. The pious king Aśoka ordered his edicts and inscriptions to be inscribed in Prākrits, because he wanted to reach the common man. The Indian tradition regards the Prākrits as derived from Sanskrit, though some scholars relying on the literal meaning of the term "prākrit" favour their spontaneous growth. Their structure and striking affinities with Sanskrit point to an Aryan origin, though in the long process of amalgamation the Prākrits seem to have been greatly influenced by Sanskrit.

Despite the epic influence and the supremacy of Sanskrit, the Prākrits were employed in the plays [2]). As the dramatic practice and traditions were partly borrowed from non-Aryan sources, perhaps this feature prevented the exclusion of Prākrits from the field of drama. With the ascendancy of the Guptas, Sanskrit became more popular and powerful. Already the first inscriptions in Sanskrit had appeared in the Kushan and Śaka regimes. Thereafter the inscriptions were no longer inscribed in Prākrits. The Sanskrit language attained the zenith of its glory in KĀLIDĀSA, who presented his masterpieces under the patronage of the Guptas. After KĀLIDĀSA the poets and dramatists do not seem to care much about the employment of the Prākrits which has become traditional and stereotyped. BHAVABHŪTI refrained from including any Prākrit stanza in his Mahāvīracarita and DĀMODARA GUPTA completely boycotted it in his Mahānāṭaka. As the Sanskrit drama reached its perfection in KĀLIDĀSA, it was expected that the post-Kālidāsa period would be comparatively rich in both drama and poetry. While there was a marked progress in the technique and styles of

1) C. E. M. JOAD, *Decadence*, London (1948), p. 61.
2) R. PISCHEL, *Grammatik der Prākrit-Sprachen* (1900), p. 16.

poetry and prose, the drama does not show any tendencies towards improvement. Not very long after KĀLIDĀSA there appears the renowned patron-king HARṢA, whose reputation as poet and dramatist is well established. But he fails to keep up the tradition and shows no originality. His three dramas are full of imitation and the themes are stereotyped. Very often it is argued that the deterioration in drama and poetry came as a result of lack of patronage, which is not justified. In HARṢA's court the poets were lavishly treated. It was at this period that BĀṆA wrote his two romantic tales, which are decidedly the best pieces in prose. In fact, there was no lack of patronage, but the quality of the plays deteriorated. Even after the Moghul invasion of India, the poets were well looked after by the petty chiefs and rulers.

Thus, the vernaculars in no way impeded the growth of drama nor could there be any possibility of conflict, as the vernaculars, as far as we know—did not produce any dramatic literature for a considerable period. The Gītagovinda of JAYADEVA, which is often believed to be a typical representative of *Yātrā* performances, is composed in most lucid, sweet and forceful Sanskrit. Poet VIDYĀPATI in 1400 A.D. modelled his composition on the technique of Sanskrit drama, retaining the frame intact. Therefore, the Sanskrit drama had not to face any rivalry either from Prākrits or from vernaculars. The latter attained prominence long after the decadence of dramatic traditions. On the other hand if Sanskrit had left a rich heritage in drama, the vernacular dramatic literature would have derived an immense benefit from the legacy.

Equally unconvincing is the oft-repeated excuse of the Muslim invasions. No doubt their arrival affected the political and social pattern, but they least interfered with literary traditions. The first contact of Muslims was established towards the end of the seventh century, when the crescent appeared on the Malabar horizon through some Arab traders. It was a period of tumultous upheavals in the South when the old religious and social beliefs were badly shaken. The Arab traders had no time to meddle in the social and cultural life of the country, though the people were much impressed by the simple tenets and practical ethics of Islam. In the North, the Mohammedans arrived in the 11th century, when the dramatic traditions had already declined. This was a period of imitators and petty writers, who continued to compose

plays in alarming numbers even up to the end of the sixteenth century. Therefore, it would be injudicious to lay blame squarely on the invaders. Of course, the social fibre was affected and so was the pattern of society, but the Sanskrit drama was never related to the realities of life even at its peak. It is possible that with the arrival of the Moghuls and their subjugation of the country, the patronage by the Hindu princes may have been slightly affected.

Contrary to general belief the attitude of most of the Moghul emperors remained fairly commendable and some of them even proved to be great patrons of art and literature. No doubt, Islam as a militant religion was basically opposed to the staging of plays, but where was the stage which could be demolished? On arrival in India, the Muslim rulers encouraged all the arts, laying special emphasis on dance and music. If there is any truth in the traditions, NAWAB WAZID ALI SHAH of Lucknow not only erected the first stage for the Hindi drama *Inder Sabha*, but also played the role of hero.

The Indian culture is noted for its synthetic character and power of assimilation. In the medieval ages, the Islamic and Hindu cultures both reacted on each other which paved the way for a composite Indian culture. The Muslims as a rule seldom imposed restrictions on the customs and modes of amusements, as long as the latter did not come into conflict with their faith and religious practices. ABDUR RAHIM KHANI-KHĀNA and Prince DARA SHIKOH studied Sanskrit and the poet-laureate Paṇḍitarāja JAGANNĀTHA, enamoured of the favours and splendour of the Moghul court, refused to accept the invitation of the Hindu Raja of Kanauj [1]). It was during the medieval period that the enormous mass of vernacular literature was produced and that devotional writings of rare merit appeared. The very fact that this period produced saint poets from the humblest ranks of life as contrasted to eminent court-poets of Sanskrit like KĀLIDĀSA, BHAVABHŪTI and others, is a proof in favour of reaction against the class and caste traditions. If Sanskrit drama had given some lead, these poets could have produced equally brilliant dramatic compositions. But as this drama had run its full course of a limited period, it failed to arouse

[1]) See J. B. CHAUDHURY, *Contributions of Muslims to Sanskrit Learning*, II, Calcutta (1954), pp. 81-88.

any enthusiasm either for retention or revival of lost traditions, though plays in Sanskrit continued to be composed even as late as the 18th century.

One is liable to feel unhappy at the thought that while dramatic traditions in Greece and Rome developed into a positive force resulting in a rich theatrical stage, the Sanskrit drama despite a promising beginning, reliable basic material and a sound technique of its own, confined itself to the so-called élite and the royalties. The assurance extended by BHARATA that drama would be a source of delight and entertainment for all merely remained an ideal. In later times when theatres in Europe and some parts of Asia entertained packed houses and staged the plays of distinguished dramatists, the Sanskrit drama had seen its end. The end would have been purposeful if the dramatic traditions should have left the legacy of a stage for which the modern Indian languages looked to theatre in the West. Since Independent India nowadays seeks to revive the lost traditions and is keen to introduce new features in its cultural life, it is to be hoped that a national stage consistent with our background and requirements will form a part of our planning.

The study offered in the following chapters could by no means be considered exhaustive. It is only an angle on another approach to the problem which, when developed, may lead to some useful results.

CHAPTER ONE

A SURVEY OF CULTURAL AND SOCIAL TRADITIONS

One peculiarity of Indian literature is its uninterrupted continuity from the earliest period down to the present age. Each branch of this literature, originating from its precursor, presupposes the existence of a parental source and finally all the tributaries merge into the unfathomable waters of the Vedas. The order of continuity does not stop here, for the three Vedas of Yajur, Sāman, and Atharvan are dependent on the earliest Saṃhitā of the Ṛgveda. While this chain gives a long continuity and strength to the entire range of Sanskrit literature, it is not free from some inevitable disadvantages. As the Vedas, according to Indian tradition and belief, are eternal [1]) and are regarded an illimitable source of knowledge, the orthodox in India have developed a tradition of tracing the origins from the Vedic texts. Be it medicine, magic, philosophy, grammar, music or mathematics, Indian belief seeks to obtain the patronage of the holy texts, which ultimately is dug out. As these texts have been a compendium of various types of activities —religious, social, etc.—they do have a casual reference of some kind to offer. But this slavish tendency often leads to the disadvantage of ignoring other patent factors, which may be vital for origin and development of a particular field of literature. An orthodox section, especially the Arya-Samāja sect, strongly believes that the Vedas are the eternal source of all knowledge of mankind, of all truth and nothing but the truth. Therefore, regardless of other cogent evidences, they strive hard to obtain a Vedic sanction, which may be even of a feeble, artificial and farcical character and at times may not have any bearing on the subject.

Undoubtedly the Vedas stand at the head of Indian literature and have given to the ancient Hindus their standard of thought

[1]) YĀSKA, *Nirukta*, Satyavrata Sāmaśrami ed., Calcutta (1885), Vol. 2, 1.1.2, p. 24. Cf. '*etena puruṣa-vidyānityatvāt karma-sampattir mantro vede*'. Also the anthological quotation '*vedas tu bhagavān svayam*'.

and their culture. But it would be injudicious to discard other sources and elements with which the early Aryans came into clash and especially the culture of the non-Aryans who, also according to the best preserved Vedic traditions, were possessors of an advanced material civilization. It would be dangerous to form too exalted an opinion of the early Aryans and their moral standards as unspoilt children of nature [1]). The picture may be idyllic and pleasing but nothing would be farther from the truth than to depict the Vedic singer as an ideal character free from all profanities and secular traits of life. The early Vedic people were neither innocent shepherds nor barbarous cannibals nor ideal spiritualists [2]).

Similarly it will be wrong to presume that the Saṃhitās reflect the entire range of activities of the early Vedic people. These Saṃhitā texts are mere collections, brought into their present form at a much later date. These were planned and arranged according to some set purpose [3]). The editors keen to preserve the core of their knowledge, must have exercised their discretion in expunging such texts, which may have been found profane and objectionable. Opinions are still divergent as to whether the Ṛgveda should be regarded the earliest monument of Aryan or Indo-European mental life or it should be considered a product of the Indian mind. It would be a patent mistake to regard the entire literary and social traditions purely Aryan in character and spirit, disallowing any margin to the great bulk-amalgamation and the stratification running into centuries of the pre-historic times.

Early Studies of the Indian Dramatic Literature.

When Keith published the results of his researches in his work entitled '*Sanskrit Drama*', nothing was known of the Indus Valley Civilization, which later revolutionized the chronology and character of Indological studies. Likewise when Sylvain Lévi produced that admirable treatise on the Indian drama [4]), he naturally looked for the origin of Sanskrit drama in the Vedic literature. At that

[1]) M. Winternitz, *History of Indian Literature*, Vol. 1, Calcutta (1927), p. 67.

[2]) *Ibid.*, p. 68.

[3]) Yāska, *Nirukta*, Vol. 2, 1.6.5, p. 317. Cf. '*te bilma-grahaṇāya imaṃ granthaṃ samāmnāśiṣuḥ vedañ ca vedāṅgāni ca*'.

[4]) S. Lévi, *Le théâtre indien*, Paris (1890).

period the unsuspected wealth of the Indus valley lay hidden under the débris of darkness. To European scholars the dawn of civilization was confined to the colourful horizon of the Tigris-Euphrates and Nile valleys alone, which marched further east with excavations in the Punjab. "It opened a new epoch in oriental archaeology; adding another fascinating chapter to the history of civilization for the problem it poses and the fresh clues it supplies" [1].

In their first flush of contact with the Indian literature, most scholars had formed some fixed ideas about the origin and development of dramatic literature in India. Scholars such as MAX MÜLLER, LÉVI, OLDENBERG, HILLEBRANDT, PISCHEL, SCHROEDER and others sifted the contents of the Vedic texts. They had abundant faith in the overall supremacy of the Vedic Aryans and regarded the original inhabitants of this subcontinent as nothing short of primitive niggards. It had become customary to paint the early inhabitants black. But in the face of modern findings, close and systematic study of the ethnic and anthropological data, the earlier theories appear to be outmoded. For nothing would be farther from the truth than the belief that the pre-Aryan population of India consisted of dark Dasyus alone, and that the entire superstructure of Indian civilization and culture is purely Aryan in spirit and form.

As observed earlier, when the Mantras were being classified and compressed into the Saṃhitā form, it is likely that several mantras and hymns may have been discarded by the seers, which did not fit into their arrangement. It is possible that the redactors excluded those portions which may perhaps be called "secular", because the texts preserved are characterized by a predominance of mythological, ritual and sacerdotal hymns. The number of "secular" hymns probably was comparatively small, because what we call secular life was not far detached from religious life. A small number of hymns, mainly belonging to the 10th Maṇḍala of the Ṛgveda, have often been regarded as didactic, secular or even humorous or satirical texts, which according to many scholars do not seem to have any direct relation to Vedic religion and philosophy. These hymns, too, must however also be considered to be completely serious and religious

[1] HEINRICH ZIMMER, *Myths and symbols in Indian art*, New York (1953), p. 98.

in character [1]. They may have originated in circles and groups of ancient Indian society other than the Brahmanical priest-family who concentrated on their own traditions, beliefs and rites. They may have been 'less orthodox' or 'official' in origin and for some reason or other been adopted by the Brahmanical redactors who then already attempted to adopt, sanction and bring under their control religious matters that had been even the property of other groups. Though their number would not exceed twenty, these dialogue and monologue hymns have also preserved some glimpses of the early "secular" life in Aryan India.

Dialogue hymns of the Ṛgveda

The dialogue hymns which are obviously narrative in character, have been the subject of a long drawn controversy. These poems are not connected with any religious sacrifices and can easily form a connecting link between the epics and dramatic poetry. While explaining their enigmatic and obscure character, Oldenberg [2]) pointed out that in the Vedic and the epic poems only the portions of highest emotional value were retained in verse as they could be easily memorised. The prose portions serving as connecting links were, in his opinion, dropped out at the time of the Saṃhitā formation. Thus the combination of prose and verse in Sanskrit drama would be a legacy of the early Vedic dialogue hymns, which are also known as *Ākhyāna* hymns. The existence of such a possibility was earlier hinted at by Windisch [3]), who focussed attention on this special feature of Sanskrit literature on the analogy of the Old Irish legend poetry. But as the theory dwelt too much on the unproven and hypothetical assumption of the existence of prose, it could not hold ground for long. It met with opposition from Max Müller [4]) and Lévi [5]), who saw dramas in the hymns and

[1]) J. Gonda, *The so-called secular, humorous and satirical hymns of the Ṛgveda, Orientalia Neerlandica,* Leiden (1948), p. 312.

[2]) Hermann Oldenberg, '*Das altindische* Ākhyāna' and 'Ākhyānahymnen *im Ṛgveda*', ZDMG 37 (1883), p. 54 ff. and ZDMG 39 (1885), p. 52 ff.

[3]) Ernst Windisch, *Geschichte der Sanskrit Philologie,* p. 404 ff.; Winternitz, HIL I, p. 101 n.

[4]) A. B. Keith, *The Sanskrit Drama,* Oxford (1924), p. 15; Max Müller is reported to have presented this view while interpreting the Marut hymn RV 1.165. He believed that this hymn was enacted by two groups representing Indra and Marut.

[5]) Lévi, TI, p. 301 ff., 307 f.

argued that as the poems were connected with religious cult, these must have been accompanied with dance and music. The suggestion appealed to VON SCHROEDER [1]) and HERTEL [2]), who characterised the dialogue hymns as part of a ritual drama, which on ethnological grounds is invariably accompanied with music and dance. As the Vedic religion does not object to dancing of the Gods, the priests could assume the divine roles. HERTEL specially emphasized the importance of music for achieving distinction in voices, implying the necessity of more than one singer.

While one cannot deny the dramatic qualities of the hymns and must admit that the relation between drama and the religious songs and dances is an established feature [3]) of ethnology, a close scrutiny of these hymns dismisses any possibility of their presenting any definite dramatic data. The theory suffers from the fault of too much of conjecture and calls for a ritual explanation for which there are no grounds. In case these dialogues were accompanied with any dramatic traditions, the earliest commentators like YĀSKA [4]) and ŚAUNAKA who recognise these hymns as *Saṃvāda* or *Ākhyāna*, would have made some allusion to this nature. The fact that neither the commentaries on the Brāhmaṇas nor the early grammarians take any notice of such a phenomenon suffices to reject the validity of the argument. The fact is that these dialogues were intended to infuse a realistic touch to the Vedic narration and are illustrations of a semi-epic or semi-dramatic technique in the art of expression. Such poems frequently occur in the Mahābhārata, Purāṇas and in Buddhist literature [5]).

BHARATA's own testimony precludes the possibility of Vedic dialogues forming the base of drama. While enumerating the contributory factors, Brahmā is said to have borrowed the mere text from the Ṛgveda [6]), which had no element of acting in it. At no place BHARATA acknowledges indebtedness to Vedic *Ākhyāna*

[1]) L. VON SCHROEDER, *Mysterium und Mimus im Ṛgveda* Leipzig (1908); Vienna Oriental Journal, 23, p. 223.

[2]) J. HERTEL, VOJ, 18, p. 59 ff., 137 ff.; 23, p. 273 ff.; 24, p. 117 ff.

[3]) G. VAN DER LEEUW, *In den hemel is eenen dans*, Amsterdam (1930), pp. 37-38.

[4]) YĀSKA, *Nirukta*, Vol. 12, 2.7.2, pp. 237-246; Vol. 4, (1891), 11.3.13, p. 220; S. K. DE, *History of Sanskrit Literature*, Calcutta (1947), p. 45.

[5]) WINTERNITZ, HIL I, p. 102.

[6]) NS K.M., 1.17.

hymns. Two essential features of drama are its imitation of life situations [1] and its capacity to be enacted [2]. The Vedic texts which were sacred enough not to permit even a slight modification in recitation [3], could hardly have been employed for any dramatic purpose, needing modulation of voice and emphasis on some portions of the text. Besides, there is no evidence to prove that the dialogue hymns were ever sung. We only know of Sāmaveda chants sung by an *Udgātā* priest.

Dialogues of similar nature are found in the holy book of the Zoroastrians, which bears a close resemblance to the Vedas in spirit, form and mythology. It is sometimes believed that some hymns of the Vedas which show great affinity to the Avestic texts may have been composed in Iran [4]. These dialogue hymns [5], composed under similar circumstances in a Haoma-producing country, did not leave any legacy of a drama. Early Iranian literature down to the Sassanian period had not known any drama. This may indirectly imply that the Aryans who migrated to India found some native traditions, which in course of their long association were developed to the perfection of an art. The fact that such traditions developed only in India, may pre-suppose the existence of some dramatic element in pre-Aryan India.

Professors HILLEBRANDT [6] and KONOW [7] with no bias for the dialogue theory, insisted that the Vedic rituals have not only the

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1) *Ibid.*, 1.78.

2) *Māl.* act I, cf. '*prayoga-pradhānaṃ hi nāṭyam*'.

3) The verse originally occurs in Nāradīya Śikṣā 1.1.5. Here quoted from *Mahābhāṣya* of PATAÑJALI, Bombay (1908), 1.1.1, p. 8; *Pāṇinīya Śikṣā*, M. GHOSH, Calcutta (1938), p. 21, p. 44. Cf. *duṣṭaḥ śabdaḥ svarato varṇato vā mithyāprayukto na tam artham āha, sa vāgvajro yajamānaṃ hinasti yathendraśatruḥ svarato 'parādhāt.* The text in Pāṇinīya Śikṣā reads '*mantro hīnaḥ*' instead of '*duṣṭaḥ śabdaḥ*', emphasizing the importance of accuracy in the case of Vedic stanzas. In the Ṛk recension of the *Pāṇinīya Śikṣā* verse no. 54, p. 44, it is mentioned that if anybody reads the Vedas without observing proper accents and places of articulation, the Vedas of Ṛk, Yajuḥ, and Sāman burn him and he is made to be born in a lower form.

4) S. K. CHATTERJI, *Indo-Aryan and Hindi*, Ahmedabad (1942), pp. 47-48; DE, IAC iv-5, Jan. 1956, p. 267; R. N. DANDEKAR, *Sources of Indian Tradition*, Columbia, New York (1956), Ch. i, p. 7.

5) JACQUES DUCHESNE GUILLEMIN, *Hymns of Zarathushtra*, London (1952), hymn 29, p. 56.

6) A. HILLEBRANDT, *Die Anfänge des indischen Dramas*, Munich (1914), p. 22.

7) S. KONOW, *Das indische Drama*, Berlin (1920), p. 42.

essential elements of drama but have drama even in actual form. Without adducing any relevant proofs they share the optimism of recognising the existence of a ritual, which must have been accompanied with dance, music and acting.

Equally unconvincing is the view propounded by KEITH [1]), who irrespective of dialogue hymns traces the germ of the drama in the ritual ceremonies. Alluding to an incident in the Soma sacrifice [2]), where a Śūdra is ushered selling the beverage and finally gets maltreated, he suggests that the incident must have been enacted in a dramatic fashion. His suggestion that the Mahāvrata ceremony consisting of an argument between a white-complexioned Vaiśya and a dark-skinned Śūdra, has all the convincing characteristics of a dramatic situation, falls short of pointing out any actual dramatic representation and suffers from the inherent shortcoming of placing too much reliance on imagination. There is no evidence to the fact that these ceremonies ever amused any onlookers and were presented by actors [3]). His interpretation that the rite aims at establishing the superiority of an Aryan over the dark-skinned Śūdra [4]), is also not tenable. Similarly the episode of a Brāhmaṇa lad and a hetaera abusing each other and finally culminating in a sexual union, could never be acted and enacted by Brāhmaṇas, who seldom recognised acting as an honourable pursuit. The allusion to the triumph of light over darkness and sexual intercourse in a ritual are only remnants of magico-ritual cult [5]). All such attempts could be characterised as vague and unconvincing because the protagonists failed to bring out definite proofs of some representation by actors and Naṭas. The mere presence of a few dialogue hymns of diverse character or funny situations of perhaps somewhat ludicrous nature, can not be interpreted as positive proofs in support of a theory proving the existence of a dramatic representation.

Though unrelated to the dramatic traditions the dialogue

[1]) KEITH, SD, pp. 21, 23 and 27.
[2]) *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24; *Śāṅkhāyana Āraṇyaka*, pp. 72 ff.
[3]) KONOW, ID, p. 42 f.
[4]) KEITH, SD, p. 24. Cf. "It is impossible without ignoring the obvious nature of this rite, not to see in it a mimic contest to gain the sun, the power of light, the Aryan, striving against that of darkness, the Śūdra."
[5]) J. GONDA, *Zur Frage nach dem Ursprung und Wesen des indischen Dramas*, Acta Orientalia Vol. 19, Leiden (1943), pp. 342-46.

hymns must have exercised considerable influence on the epics in which dialogues of similar semi-epic nature are occasionally found. A critical study of the dramatic themes reveals the fact that the poets borrowed more from the epic than the Vedic texts, as evidenced by the theme of Śakuntalā and Vikramorvaśī of KĀLIDĀSA [1]. *It is true that dialogue is an essential feature of the drama but it* has rarely marked the beginning of drama. Similarly, the mere presence of the dramatic element is not proof of the existence of drama in the Veda. Even if the origin of Sanskrit drama is thought to be associated with the dialogues in the Ṛgveda, it needs positive proofs to explain the wide gap between the hypothetical beginning and the actual drama [2].

GLIMPSES OF SOCIAL LIFE IN PRE-ARYAN AND ARYAN INDIA

Literature reflects the life of the people and the country in a particular age. It conserves the tendencies and main characteristics of the people and is invariably loyal to its surroundings. While literature in other countries is regarded the bed-rock of history, it has not helped in India to build a sound chronology of events and persons. However, it would be worthwhile to ponder over the glimpses of social life as reflected in the earliest vestiges of Indian culture and Vedic literature. A comparative study of the two periods may help in viewing the problem in its correct perspective.

Until very recently, the history of India was generally regarded as the theory of the Aryans in India. The earliest literary sources of Indo-Aryan history are the Vedas which are known to have been handed down from generation to generation through oral tradition, implying that literature in India came much earlier than the art of writing. All knowledge was conserved in memory and the holy texts were passed from ear to ear acquiring the technical name of *śruti*. The oral retention of the sacred texts called for the utmost

[1]) ṚV X. 95, this dialogue narrating the story of Purūravas and Urvaśī supplied the basis for narrations in *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* XI, 5.1, *Harivaṃśa, Viṣṇupurāṇa* and *Kathāsaritsāgara*. KĀLIDĀSA is supposed to have borrowed the theme of his drama *Vikramorvaśī* from *Harivaṃśa* and *Viṣṇupurāṇa* and that of *Śakuntalā* from MBH and *Padmapurāṇa*.

[2]) For summary and discussion of various theories regarding the dialogue hymns, see KEITH, ZDMG 64 (1910), p. 534 ff.; JRAS (1911), p. 979 and SD, pp. 13-23; WINTERNITZ, HIL I, pp. 100-108; DE, HSL, Calcutta (1947), pp. 43-46; GONDA, Acta Orientalia 19, pp. 329-453.

fidelity and accuracy together with uncommon devotion to the purpose. These limitations in a way must have impeded the growth of literature other than religious, because the aim was to conserve and memorise only the important and the sacred texts. However, despite these limitations a few quasi-religious and didactic hymns have found their way into Vedic literature, because the editors may have regarded them as sacred and indispensible. In spite of their poetical, speculative and mystic character these hymns have helped in supplying some workable data. But literature alone, even if it may have preceded the art of writing, cannot be considered as an authentic source of history, which should also be constructed on the basis of material remains and objects of early life in India, extending to the pre-historic period. The researches made in the last four or five decades have yielded a wealth of sources which depict the early phases of culture and civilization in different forms and periods. The findings have changed the early pictures about the ancient Indian society and also point to the possibility of changing the present perspective by investigations to be carried out in future. At present, it would be safe to maintain that the deep layers buried over thousands of years, have been found comparatively richer than the upper layers of the later stage. But as the Indus valley culture will be discussed in a separate chapter, only a short résumé of the early Dravidians is being attempted here.

It is an admitted fact that as the history of pre-Aryan India is mainly constructed on the basis of scanty remains of a wide-spread civilization, it is not comprehensive or compact as that of the Aryans. Most of the earliest Tamil literature is lost and whatever has survived bears the stamp of a composite culture [1]. However, Bishop Caldwell and Shrinivas Iyyengar made an extensive study of pre-Aryan civilization on the basis of the earliest existing vocabulary and have presented a picture, which may not be too flattering but sums up the main cultural aspects of the pre-Aryan people and also points to their remarkable achievements in material terms [2]. According to Caldwell 'The Dravidians had kings who resided in strong-built houses and ruled over small units of country. Their minstrels recited songs and praises at the festivals.

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1) Nilakanta Sastri, *The Colas*, Madras (1955), IV, pp. 63-64.

2) Chatterji, *Racial movements and pre-historic Culture in Vedic Age*, London (1952), pp. 158-59.

They possessed some alphabetical characters written in particular style on palmyra leaves. A bundle of leaves was called book. They worshipped their God in a God-house or temple. They had laws and customs but neither judges nor lawyers'.

Compared to the above picture the early Aryans, though materially poor are marked for their spiritual attainments. In the early stages they are depicted as nomads struggling for home and hearth. The family was their formal unit of society. They were monogamic, though polyandry was not unknown. Sexual morality was not always very high but incest marriages were unknown [1]. The girls had freedom of chosing their husbands but had to live under the guardianship of a male member. The marriage was indissoluble [2].

Towards the later part of the Vedic period and in the post-Vedic period, the accent was on the purity of race and the caste, based on *Varṇa* and *Jāti*. Rules disallowed inter-marriages and even inter-dining, but were frequently violated as evidenced by the expanding institution of marriage, which sanctioned the eight types of unions [3]. In addition to four types of Aryan marriages kidnapping, forcible marital relations, purchasing of bride and marriage with secret consent of boy and girl came to be regularised. Dravidian society, on the other hand, knew of only a simple concept of marriage emphasising the natural coming together of man and woman, which was called *Kāmakkūṭṭam* [4]. Due to the admixture of races, increasing instances of adultery, marriages with unapproved women and violations of the caste-restrictions, many castes had sprung up in the south which are criticised by BAUDHĀYANA[5]), who himself lived in the Āndhra regions of the South.

Realising that the caste-barriers were giving way under the heavy

[1]) R. K. MOOKERJI, *Hindu Civilization*, Bombay (1950), V, p. 94, VI, p. 164, 166.

[2]) *Ibid.*, VI, pp. 135-36, 164.

[3]) J. GONDA, *'Ārṣa and Āsura type of marriage'* in Sarūpa-Bhāratī, V.V.R. Institute, Hoshiarpur (1954), pp. 223-37. It is interesting to observe that in the early Tamil literature the above eight types are ingeniously squeezed in the local types. The most popular form was called *Kāmakkuṭṭam* but the Tamils had separate terms for unilateral and abnormal types of love. The synthesis attempted by TOLKĀPPIYAR in Porul 104-6 is neither natural nor was it easy but it gives an idea about certain types of marriages in the South from which the Aryans may have drawn inspiration. See NILAKANTA SASTRI, *The Colas*, pp. 64-65.

[4]) NILAKANTA SASTRI, *The Colas*, p. 65.

[5]) *Baudhāyana Dharma Śāstra*, 1.1.2. 3, 4, 13.

pressure of incursions, the Aryan priests devised a catholic rule, which admitted children begotten by an Aryan father on a non-Aryan female as Aryan [1]). This change in the polity accommodated many foreigners and artisans, who enjoyed a better status than the Śūdras and untouchables. However, later the attitude of the Aryans towards women in general stiffened, for they realised that most of the social disorders were caused by the freedom they enjoyed. They were no longer allowed to read and recite the Vedas and were compelled to look after the house. They were brought to the level of Śūdras [2]).

In the early phases of their pre-historic existence, the Vedic Aryans believed in material prosperity and all the earthly gains, but this attitude got in the leading circles changed in the Upaniṣad and Sūtra periods. Apart from pursuits of pleasure and sport they offered in AV [3]) prayers for the meanest advantage and vulgar pleasures but in succeeding postvedic and Purāṇic periods they aspired to salvation alone, supplementing it with high moral ideals. The daring horseman and skilful archers of the Indo-Iranian period no longer played dice with heavy stakes. In the literary traditions influenced by Brāhmaṇas, philosophers, ascetics and propounders of Dharma such horseman, gamblers and archers were perhaps pushed into the background. In the early stages men and women moved together, pressed the invigorating Soma together and perhaps danced together [4]), a custom which does not find mention in the later literature.

On a comparison of the above possible pictures it can be argued that the matriarchal system of the Dravidians conceded greater freedom to their women-folk. The Aryans attained leadership in the spiritual and intellectual fields but the domains of arts and crafts were perhaps still in the hands of the non-Aryan population. While the non-Aryans respected the new ruling class for their learning, they may have also made themselves indispensable in carrying trade, commerce and other useful professions. In view of the scanty references to dance and drama in the Vedic literature and of the

[1]) Mookerji, HC, p. 164. *Manusmṛti*, 10.67.

[2]) *Manusmṛti*, V. 139; *Bhagavadgītā*, IX. 32. Cf. *striyo vaiśyāḥ tathā śūdrāḥ te 'pi yānti parāṃ gatim.*

[3]) Winternitz, HIL I, p. 142; AV, VII. 35, 90; VI. 138.

[4]) Mookerji, HC, p. 77.

fact that the Dravidian population in the South has from the very beginning well developed traditions in dance, music and acting, we may suppose that the non-Aryan influence on the development of these arts must have been considerable, a supposition which is supported by the evidence reflected in the Sangam literature [1]).

As the Aryans had yet to consolidate their position, they maintained an aloofness for some period. For enforcing law and order they had to maintain their dignity by refraining from free-mixing for some time. But as soon as they gave up their nomadic life and started building new townships they needed services of skilled non-Aryan workmen, who had sufficient experience of construction work. Being at an earlier period given to pastoral and nomadic way of life, the Aryans, perhaps, had no or little experience of the urban mode of life. Given these opportunities the Dravidians must have hurled themselves with zeal in the world of arts and crafts, contributing largely to the evolution of a composite Indian culture.

Though exact details of their fusion are being yet awaited, their increasing mutual regard must have brought the two closer and must have also helped the Aryans in consolidating their position. They started looking to this newly acquired land with national pride and shared their feelings with the early inhabitants. The picture of Bhāratavarṣa as recorded in the Purāṇas admits the existence of several tribes and the traditional four orders (*varṇas*). Once the Indo-Aryans settled their basic differences and knew each other's social position, they built up this land with all the devotion. It engaged their deepest sentiments as expressed in the later literature. But the main structure of early Hinduism, erected on the twofold division of *Āśrama* and *Varṇa*, could never be shaken. It was unfortunate that the caste which divides the people was encouraged and the *Āśrama*, which unites the people in four stages, could not be found popular.

When the Aryan leaders propagated the advantages of the hereditary division they perhaps never anticipated any evils arising out of it. They were the unfortunate authors and victims of a system, which carried the germs of disintegration. In their first clash with non-Aryans they soon found themselves outnumbered.

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[1]) M. VARADARAJAN, *History of Tamil Drama in 'Bharatīya Nāṭya Sāhitya'*, Govinda Das Commemoration Volume, Delhi (1956), pp. 421-23; NILAKANTA SASTRI, *The Dravidian Literatures*, p. 2, 3; *The Colas*, pp. 76-77.

There was danger of total extinction of their race if interdiction in marriage was not imposed. Therefore, the first social division was not based on status but on Varṇa perhaps implying the colour, which could be easily recognised. The Brāhmaṇa sincerely believed in the beneficent advantages of this system. Therefore, despite repeated challenges and usurpation of his authority in later times, he stuck to it with the proverbial Mohammedan's rigour. But despite religious differences and reactions against Brāhmaṇic Law, there existed a homogeneous conception of unity in India. In the words of a distinguished British statesman [1] "the Hindu regards India not only as a political unit but as the outward embodiment, as the temple, nay—even as the goddess mother of his spiritual culture. He made India the symbol of his culture. He filled it with his soul. In his consciousness, it was his greater self".

Another factor which contributed to its early unity was the submission to a single political authority of some well known monarchs. The wide influence of this sovereignty was further reflected in the cultural unity acquired through the vehicle of the Sanskrit language [2]. This helped in unifying the country till culture and country became two component parts of a single concept, reflected in terms like *Āryāvarta* and *Sapta-sindhu*. Due to its inherent dynamic aspects the composite Indian culture spread out beyond the frontiers of this land reaching several countries across the sea, which are now included in Greater India [3]. In spite of injunctions against sea-voyages, the mobile Indian youth, especially from the South [4], travelled across the borders and traces of their cultural influence are preserved in Java, Sumatra, Bali, Siam, Cambodia and several other places. [5]

[1]) RAMSAY MACDONALD, *Introduction to Fundamental unity of India by* R. K. MOOKERJI Bombay (1954).

[2]) CHATTERJI, *Sanskrit the Symbol of Hindu Culture,* IAH, pp. 65-66, 77-78; VA, Introduction by K. M. MUNSHI, p. 9.

[3]) CHATTERJI, IAH, pp. 67-68.

[4]) NILAKANTA SASTRI, *South Indian influences in the Far East,* Bombay (1949), pp. 1-7 (Introduction). The author has spot-lighted the role of Andhras and Tamils, played in far-eastern places like Indo-China, Burma, Sumatra, Kamboja, Campa, Siam, Philippines and other southern islands.

[5]) J. GONDA, *Sanskrit in Indonesia,* International Academy of Indian Culture, Nagpur (1952), pp. 11-12, 17-22, 24-29, 89-93 and 94-96. The book offers an extensive study of the problem, acknowledging the contribution of Dravidians in the spread of Indian culture. This topic is discussed at length in Chapter V of this treatise.

CHAPTER TWO

CONFLUENCE OF THE ARYANS AND THE NON-ARYAN DRAVIDIANS

An unsurmountable hurdle in the treatment of the ancient history of India, political and cultural, is caused by a deplorable lack of positive chronology. Most of the dates of the major political events and that of the vast mass of literature, which forms the basis of any cultural study, are but imperfectly known or sometimes based on conjecture. Great works like the Mahābhārata, the Rāmāyaṇa and the Purāṇas, which have served the purpose of encyclopaediae for ages, have often been revised and interpolated and so render it difficult to supply any definite data. This has resulted in disorder and gives unlimited scope to quaint speculations. The early British historians, motivated by their political objectives, concentrated more on the benefits of British rule in India. Generation after generation the students in the Indian Universities were only taught to decry the Hindu social system, without being told as to how it came to stay as a result of synthesis in social, political and cultural forces[1]). Such conceptions only blurred the vision, rendering it difficult to have a clear and unbiased perspective of some important problems related to the early cultural history of India. Under these circumstances, beset with controversies and wide divergence of opinions, the problem of the role of early settlers in India continued to remain unsettled.

After the introduction of Sanskrit to the West, it was but natural that the early scholars should have believed in the supremacy of the Vedic Aryans, reflected in the fields of art, literature, religion and philosophy. Never for a moment did it occur to them that nearly 5000 years ago, before the Aryans were even heard of, the Punjab, Sindh and other parts of India were enjoying a singularly uniform civilization [2]). The common belief prevailed that the fair-complexio-

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1) K. M. Munshi, VA, Foreword, p. 9.

2) J. H. Marshall, *Mohenjodaro and the Indus Civilization*, London (1931), Preface.

ned, blue-eyed, sharp-featured Aryans entered into this land of seven rivers at some remote period of history, and subjected the dark forces of the early inhabitants by their military supremacy and other qualities [1]. It was argued that the pre-Aryan population of India were altogether on a lower plane of civilization. Whatever noble and sublime elements are retained by modern Hindu religion and culture were considered to be solid contributions from the Aryans. The early Vedic records supported this presumption and the picture flattered the vanity of both Europeans and Indians. It corresponded with the situation in India and America of the period when the dark and uncivilized aborigines had to submit to the will of their victorious masters. There was no wilful distortion of facts but the circumstances warranted this state of affairs. The history of the Asiatic world had not been studied before and the researches in the field of comparative religion and mythology were still in their infancy [2]. The archaeological evidence had not yielded that mine of information which helped in connecting links in the subsequent period. Thus, the theory of a civilized Aryan race imposing its culture on a dark race, was convincingly established and the scholars kept this theory going till a challenge arose in the form of the discovery of the Indus Valley civilization [3].

Although this idea of Aryan supremacy gained popularity yet contradictions in the domains of art, language and culture of the Hindus presented complications, which could neither be explained nor rejected summarily. This diverse nature of their cultures, and the sharp contrasts between the old Aryan and the Dravidian worlds, could no longer be ignored by the patch-work of an imposed Aryan garb [4]. Meanwhile researches made in the fields of linguistics, anthropology and ethnology in Central Europe, Asia minor, India and Persia dimmed the glory of Indo-European antiquity. It was realised that the Aryans did not of their own initiative advance in the cultural, intellectual and material spheres but possessed the gift of receptivity, which helped them in imbibing

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[1]) S. K. De, IAC, Article on '*Beginnings of Indian Civilization*', 4, January 1956, pp. 261-2; Chatterji, IAH, p. 31.

[2]) De, IAC, 4, January 1956, p. 263; S. K. Chatterji, *The Indian Synthesis*, IAC, April 1954, pp. 330-31; also IAH, Second lecture, pp. 30-33.

[3]) K. Ramkrishnaihah, *Studies in Dravidian Philology*, Madras (1953), pp. 8-9.

[4]) Chatterji, IAC, April 1954, pp. 330-31.

and assimilating all what they considered best and sublime [1].

When the objects excavated at Mohenjodaro and Harappa were closely studied, it was felt that the early inhabitants of the Indus Valley had many features in common with the Dravidians in the South, who contributed many important elements to the evolution of Hindu culture [2]. It was further suggested that the Indo-Aryans while on their way to the land of seven rivers, picked up several characteristics during their contacts with the peoples among whom they may have sojourned. The high degree of civilization reflected in the Ṛgveda could not be explained otherwise. The Indo-Aryans had perhaps also developed some traits of a composite culture before arriving in India, which helped them in the process of Aryanization of the local population and in consolidating their position [3].

THE ARYAN IMMIGRATION AND CONTACT WITH THE INDUS VALLEY PEOPLE

Like several other major problems of early Indian history the question of the migration of the Aryans to India still continues to remain controversial. Most of the arguments on either side result from a singletrack mind, a psychological instinct or some political prejudices. While some European historians [4] tried to paint India and its inhabitants in unpleasant colours, an orthodox section in India sought to counterblast all such arguments by asserting that the Aryans never entered here from any other land and that they were the first children of this soil [5]. These views are vitiated by an 'Oriental despotism' and are no better than their occidental counterparts [6]. Fortunately the scope of the present work does not permit any discussion on either of the extreme views, except that the Aryans at one or other time clashed with the primitive inhabitants, called Dāsas and Dasyus in the Ṛgveda, who could

[1] G. E. SEN, *Cultural Unity of India*, Govt. of India publication, Delhi (1954), pp. 18-19.

[2] CHATTERJI, IAH, pp. 31-32.

[3] DE, IAC, January 1956, p. 267.

[4] V. A. SMITH, *Early History of India*, Oxford (1908); see also P. SHILOTRI, *Why Britain rules India*, New York (1926), pp. 13-14.

[5] SAMPŪRṆĀNANDA, *Aryon-Kā Ādi-Deśa*, Allahabad (1939); P. L. BHARGAVA, *India in Vedic times*, Lucknow (1956), pp. 23-32; A. C. DAS, *Ṛgvedic India*, Calcutta (1921), Chapter vii.

[6] Dr. MAJUMDAR, VA, pp. 10, 39.

be equated with the Dravidians and the Muṇḍa speaking pre-Aryans. Whatever may be the view of the orthodox sections in India, the evidences in support of an Aryan immigration are overwhelming in number, convincing in nature and rational in character. Whether they emerged from Central Asia or Europe, they had evolved an Indo-Iranian culture before becoming finally separated from the Iranians. It is suggested that even the Ṛgveda, which is perhaps the earliest document of the Indo-European people, may have a beginning elsewhere [1]. However, it would be preposterous to believe that it was brought to India as a national heritage and was later redacted according to the exigencies of the subsequent period [2].

Anthropological Data

From ancient times India has been visited by several races in successive waves, which become absorbed into the larger population inhabiting this land. In spite of the orthodox doctrines of caste and religion, the Indian mind always believed in the superiority of man, which helped it in developing the idea of a fundamental Unity of Man [3]. It was rather this concept which prevented India from developing narrow patriotic feelings. Under the circumstances the race-fusion must have started as an inevitable feature of Indian civilization. So much so that the very word *Ārya* which earlier denoted a race, lost its racial significance and soon became synonymous with nobility, in which sense it was later used in the Prākrits and classical Sanskrit [4].

On the basis of racial anthropology, various elements contributing

[1]) R. N. Dandekar, *Sources of Indian Tradition*, Columbia University Publication, New York (1958), Opening remarks in Ch. i, p. 7: "Long before they entered into India, the Vedic Aryans must have started producing prayers and songs (*Mantras*) relating to their religion. The character of the religion was determined by the kind of life they have been living". J. Hertel maintains that the oldest part of Ṛgveda must have been composed in Iran, see his *Indo-German. Forschungen* 41 (1923), p. 188. Also Chatterji, IAH, pp. 47-48. The important points of Indo-Aryan culture and religion have been often discussed. For further information see O. Schrader-A. Nehring, *Reallexikon der Indogerm. Altertumskunde*, I, Berlin (1917-1923), p. 54 ff.

[2]) De, IAC, January 1956, p. 267.

[3]) Chatterji, IAC, 2 (1954), p. 330.

[4]) *Ibid.*, p. 332.

to the vast population of India have been carefully analysed with their various ramifications and characteristic anthropological divisions. Several scholars have analysed this racial admixture, effected during the course of several thousands of years. Of late, Dr. GUHA [1]) has presented the result of his researches which are supposed to be an improvement on the data supplied by Sir HERBERT RISLEY [2]), Dr. HUTTON [3]) and CHANDA [4]). Out of the six main races and nine sub-types inhabiting India to-day, it is the Mediterranean people who represent the entire Dravidian stock of the South, North, Sindh and Punjab. Attempts have been made to divide the population on the linguistic basis also. However, it must be clearly understood that no rigid separation is possible in the division as there is every likelihood of considerable overlappings.

An absolutely novel view is expressed by HROZNÝ [5]), the Czech scholar who deciphered the hieroglyphic Hittite script of Asia minor. He calls the builders of the Punjab and Sindh cultures 'proto-Indians' and believes that they were a branch of the Indo-European people, speaking the Hittite language. These proto-Indians carried on trade with Western Asia and were routed by Dravidian speakers from the North-West of India in about 2000-1500 *B.C.* These barbarian Dravidians possessed the country till the Aryans came and drove them out. These assumptions put forward by HROZNÝ are, in general, of a speculative type. They have been deservedly rejected by almost all scholars in the field.

1) B. S. GUHA, *Racial elements in the Population*, Oxford Press Pamphlets, Bombay (1944), pp. 24-25; CHATTERJI, *Racial Movements and Culture*, VA, pp. 141-167.

2) *The Census of India*, 1901.

3) *Ibid.*, 1931, Vol. I, pp. 424.

4) R. P. CHANDA, *Indo-Aryan Races*, Rajshahi India (1916).

5) B. HROZNÝ, *Histoire de l'Asie Antérieure et de l'Inde*, Paris, translated into English in Prague (1953), quoted IAC 2, (1954), pp. 335-36. HROZNÝ's view gets a partial support from Dr. J. E. VAN LOHUIZEN-DE LEEUW who believes that the Harappa culture was run over by a Pre-Aryan population related to Chalcolithic settlements in India in the second millenium before the birth of Christ. It is possible that the fortifications and cities then belonging to this Chalcolithic population may have been destroyed by the Aryan invasion. (She strongly feels that while the Indus Valley culture may have a beginning in 2600-2500 B.C., the peak period should not be earlier than 2350 B.C.) See Mrs. Dr. J. E. VAN LOHUIZEN-DE LEEUW, *De Protohistorische Culturen van Voor-Indië en hun datering*, Leiden (1960), pp. 19, 26-27.

The Indus Valley Civilization: Salient Features

Despite the divergence of opinions with regard to anthropological and racial divisions, one fact stands out clearly, viz., that the Aryans on their arrival in India had to face a strong opposition from some early inhabitants. When the first hordes of the Aryan invaders set foot on the rich soil of the North-West regions, the Indus people had already reached a developed form of culture to which numerous allusions are made in the Ṛgveda. The Aryans, though superior in strength, will, and perhaps in resourcefulness, were a pastoral people leading a nomadic life. They mainly lived on their cattle wealth and while herding their cattle searched for new pastures [1]). Whether due to hunger and a love of home or driven by an enterprising spirit, these hardy people had developed a resolute mind. They were daring horsemen, their chariots were swift and they had achieved perfection in archery [2]). Their fair complexion, strong build and tall stature gave them distinction in personality. Their faith in various gods infused confidence in their ranks. On the other hand their adversaries were a snub-nosed, short-statured and mostly a city-dwelling race, who had perhaps not seen any struggle for a long time. They possibly were artistic people and at the peak period of their civilization may have led a comfortable life in broad-streeted towns, swarming with planned brick-built houses. It is conjectured that their women used various ornaments and were not less sophisticated and glamorous than the modern Eves, an assumption proved by finds of a wide range of cosmetics. Rouge-like pigments, vanity-bags, collyrium sticks and even a type of lip-stick, were discovered at various excavations [3]). These and similar objects often go to show that the townfolk were a merry-making lively type (cf. also the bronze statuette of a dancing girl in an impudent pose). These finds reveal a state of prosperity and a higher civilization not found in the literary traditions preserved in the hymns of the Ṛgveda.

[1]) Also A. Chakravarti, *Introduction to Tirukkural*, Madras (1953), p. xiii.

[2]) Mookerji, HC, pp. 65-67, 77; H. G. Rawlinson, *India*, London (1954), p. 24; Chatterji, IAH, pp. 45-46.

[3]) Pusalkar, VA, p. 175; A. J. H. Mackay, *Bulletin of Museum of Fine Arts*, XXXLV, p. 91, *Chanhūdaro Excavations 1933-36*, New Haven (1943).

Their material prosperity did not affect their religious instincts adversely. They worshipped some male and female gods. They do not appear to have been oppressed with a multiplicity of gods but may perhaps have concentrated on a single god in a dancing pose, with three horns rising over his head [1]). Seated in a Yogic posture the god was sometimes surrounded by several cattle, as if he was lord of the animal kingdom. They perhaps worshipped a female goddess of fertility, corresponding to the *Ādiśakti* or *Mūlaprakṛti* of the later Indian literature [2]).

Of a wide range of bronze sculptures, the most remarkable is the figurine of a dancing girl from Mohenjodaro, with the right hand resting on the hip, the left arm covered with bangles hanging loose. The position of the legs is rather indifferent, with the head tilted provocatively in a lewd fashion adorned with a bunch of rich curly hair [3]). The figure carries unmistakable features of a proto-Dravidian people and the coiffure is suggestive of present day jungle-folks of the South of India [4]). This leaves no doubt that, at that early age, the Indus valley people had developed a taste for dancing and must have encouraged this art as a popular pastime. In another statuette representing a male, the dancer is depicted as balancing on the right foot with the left foot raised in front and the body above the waist and both arms bent down. The pose is full of movement and has been held probably to represent the non-Aryan god Śiva, the Naṭarāja [5]).

It is difficult to speculate concerning the exact nature and meaning of these dances but it may be assumed that these must have been performed under the patronage of a deity, representing the Śiva of post-vedic mythology. To quote Sir MORTIMER WHEELER [6]): "No uncertainty attaches to the divinity of the seated

1) PUSALKAR, VA, p. 181; RAWLINSON, *India*, p. 16; MOOKERJI, HC, p. 20; see also M. WHEELER, *Early India and Pakistan*, London (1959), p. 113.
2) PUSALKAR, VA, p. 186; MOOKERJI, HC, p. 20.
3) PUSALKAR, VA, p. 180; M. WHEELER, *The Indus Civilization*, Cambridge (1943), p. 67.
4) NILAKANTA SASTRI, *History of South India*, Ch. iii, p. 53.
5) PUSALKAR, VA, p. 181.
6) WHEELER, *The Indus Civilization*, p. 83; WHEELER's view finds support in MARSHALL's account of Śiva. "Śiva is pre-eminently the prince of Yogis, whence his names *Mahātapā* and *Mahāyogī*, the typical ascetic and self-mortifier . . . Like Śaivism itself Yoga had its origin among the pre-Aryan population . . . Śiva is not only the prince of Yogis, he is also the

'Śiva' of the seals, a figure which even in these small scale representations is replete with the brooding, minatory power of the great god of historic India. Here, if anywhere, may be recognised one of the pre-Aryan elements, which were to survive the Aryan invasion and to play a dominant role in the so-called Aryan culture of the post Vedic period".

It may be assumed that the later characteristics of Śiva as a Yogin and Paśupati, as preserved in the later Indian mythology, are seen in these postures. In addition to his several attributes god Śiva is supposed to wield a trident *'triśūla'*, which appears to have been developed out of the three horns on the head of the Indus god [1]. It is in any case ridiculous to see in the figure a picture of a buffalo which according to Mr. SHASTRI was a popular animal amongst the Indus people [2].

THE ARYAN AND THE DRAVIDIAN CULTS

a. *Affinities*

The fusion of the Aryans and non-Aryans is a remarkable instance of two different and widely-separated cultures which have survived in a vigorous, unified and developed form. India to-day is a happy blend of two or more major strains. The Aryan and the Dravidian contributions still survive in the two distinct groups of languages, spoken in India [3]. Although more conclusive proofs of relationship between the Indus Valley people and the Dravidian Civilization are still being awaited, several affinities are so striking that some scholars have bestowed the name of 'Proto-Dravidian' to the Indus Valley population [4].

It is presumed not without justification that much before their complete Aryanization, the primitive inhabitants influenced the

lord of beasts (*Paśupati*) and it is seemingly in reference to this aspect of his nature, that the four animals—the elephant, tiger, rhinoceros and buffalo—are grouped about him . . . We have then on this seal a god whose distinguishing attributes proclaim him the prototype, in his most essential aspects, of the historic Śiva" (*Mohenjodaro and Indus Civilization*, Vol. I, pp. 53-56).

1) MARSHALL, *Mohenjodaro and Indus Civilization*, pp. 54-56.

2) K. N. SHASTRI, *New Light on Indus Civilization*, Delhi (1958), pp. 7-13.

3) SEN, *Cultural Unity of India*, p. 15; T. BURROW, *The Sanskrit language*, London (1955), p. 373 ff.

4) SEN, *Cultural Unity of India*, pp. 14-15.

speech, culture and literature of the Aryan conquerors. Equally important is the question of the relationship between the Indus Valley speech and the Dravidian languages. Although the pictographs found at Harappa and Mohenjodaro have not been deciphered as yet, the only scholar who devoted a major part of his life to this study claimed the relationship in unmistakable terms. According to Father HERAS' investigations available in several articles, the Indus Valley people and the Dravidians of South-India belonged to one and the same stock speaking the same Dravidian language [1]). The assumption that the Mohenjodaro and Harappa people spoke a form of primitive Dravidian language accords exceedingly well with the subsequent development of the trends of history and civilization in India [2]). There is evidence, both direct and indirect, that Dravidian at one time was a popular language in the Central, Northern, Western and Eastern regions of India. The Brahui speech of Baluchistan may be but a humble remnant of the same strain [3]). Due to the paucity of conclusive proofs, it is premature to assert a relationship but there is, according to some scholars, a balance of probability that the Indus Valley language was akin to Dravidian [4]), which had, perhaps at an early date, inbibed some features of the Muṇḍa-language [5]).

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1) H. HERAS, *The Review*, Bombay (1936), Vol. II, pp. 1-16.

2) CHATTERJI, VA, pp. 156, 158, IX, pp. 190-191; MARSHALL, *Mohenj. and Indus*, Chs. xxii-xxiii.

3) SEN, *Cultural Unity of India*, p. 16; DE, IAC 4, (1956), pp. 271-72; CHATTERJI, VA, p. 155.

4) CHATTERJI, VA, pp. 156, 158; PUSALKAR, VA, pp. 190-1. In addition to the above reference CHATTERJI has discussed the topic at length in IAH, Ch. ii, p. 43 (Sindh Punjab Culture Dravidian ?). The following remark is of special interest: "The assumption that Sindh was Dravidian speaking receives a good support when we consider the fact that Brahuis still live in the neighbourhood of Sindh in Baluchistan, speaking a Dravidian language and the Brahuis may still be a remnant of Mohenjodaro people". The possibility that the Indus people spoke a Dravidian language akin to Tamil, is also mentioned by A. L. BASHAM. "The modern South India is a blend of Mediterranean and Proto Austroloid, the two chief ethnic factors in the Harappa culture. Moreover the Harappa religion seems to show many similarities with those elements of Hinduism which are specially popular in Dravidian country. In the hills of Baluchistan, where the people of Nal and Jhob cultures built their little cottages, the Brahuis though ethnically now predominantly Iranian, speak a Dravidian language. Thus it has been suggested that the Harappa folks were Dravidians and Father H. HERAS, one of the authorities who tried to read the script, has even claimed that their language was a very

b. *Amalgamation*

After their initial conquests the Aryans are supposed to have developed monarchies, ruling great tribes in the open country and pressing further East and South. They narrowed down the difference between the conquered and conquerors by marrying the captured female 'Dāsīs' and paved the way for the formation of a mixed race. This was a case of a captor who in the course of time was himself captured and captivated. It was no easy task to overcome racial prejudices, but the Aryans lost no time in adjusting their colonial policy [1]) according to the changed circumstances and encouraged the process of amalgamation [2]). In the course of time, this fusion welded the Indo-Aryans into a complete unified form of population, retaining the salient features of the two cultures. It may be pointed out that the Aryan civilization was not purely Indo-European in character and form when it arrived in India; it had borrowed and amalgamated several features of Asian and other elements to a fair degree. The Aryan element gave the newly formed Indian culture form and unity, discipline and order, but it was mainly the pre-Aryan Kol-Dravidian element on which the superstructure of Indian culture was erected [3]). Though the role of the Muṇḍa languages has been sometimes exaggerated, the existence of Proto-Muṇḍa words in Sanskrit can be taken as an argument in favour of their legitimate share in the evolution of Indian culture.

Whatever may have been the nature of this great and remarkable amalgamation, it remains a fact that after meeting the civilized Dravidians the Aryans enriched their culture considerably. It was followed by a widespread mixture of people as evidenced by anthropological data. In a general way three-fourths of Indian

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primitive form of Tamil". A. L. BASHAM, *The Wonder that Was India*, Ch. Pre-history: The Harappa Culture and the Aryans, p. 25.

[5]) F. B. J. KUIPER, *Proto-Munda Words in Sanskrit*, Amsterdam (1948), Introduction.

[1]) ṚV. IX. 63.5. *kṛṇvanto viśvam āryam*: "May we convert the world into Aryans".

[2]) S. KRISHNASWAMI AIYANGER, *Ancient India and South Indian History and Culture*, Poona (1941), Vol. I, p. 5. Speaking about the advance of the Aryans in the South, Mr. AIYANGER writes "It is here as with Greeks in ... Bactria that the Aryans changed their policy of usurpation to that of amalgamation, which alone was possible under the circumstances".

[3]) DE, IAC, 4 (1956), pp. 279-89.

culture to-day is of non-Aryan origin [1]). It would be interesting to pick out a few illustrations.

1. The first and foremost is the Hindu ritual of *Pūjā*. The entire conception of worship and offerings before an image is totally different from the early Vedic rites of fire-worship and Soma ceremony. When the mixed Indian population took to *Pūjā* based on some local cult [2]), interest in the Vedic rites gradually declined.
2. The conception of the trinity of gods is supposed to be a direct outcome of this Aryan-Dravidian fusion. After their contact with the Dravidians, the Aryans must have been terribly impressed with a malignant, active deity like Rudra-Śiva, who perhaps being closely connected with uncultivated nature, no doubt entertained intimate associations with the non-Aryans. They added his name to their expanding pantheon. Rudra who till now was closely associated with the legions of the Maruts but lacked in force and popularity was raised to the new status of Śiva. The latter both in the meditative state of Yogin and in the dancing pose of Naṭarāja, must have fascinated the Aryan mind.
3. When Śiva joined the Aryan force, he did not come alone. He brought with him the goddess of productivity and fertility and vitality. This conception of Devī or Bhagavatī worshipped in several forms was already popular among Tāntric circles [3]). Now she arrived as a spouse of Śiva. The couple Śiva and Pārvatī, representing harshness and tenderness, destruction and production, must have influenced the Aryan cult tremendously. The early Aryans only knew of the existence of a heavenly Dyaus-father and an earthly Pṛthivī-mother. But the Dravidian conception was a bold and practical one. They appear to have borrowed the great Asian [4]) mother-goddess and father-god. The former came riding on a lion in the form of Caṇḍī—the fierce

1) CHATTERJI, VA, p. 164; IAH, pp. 45, 48.

2) M. MAYRHOFER, *Etymological Sanskrit Dictionary*, Heidelberg (1958), II, p. 320. For a detailed discussion see J. CHARPENTIER, JRAS-Bengal, 16 (1950), p. 84 f. (*Festgabe Jacobi*, p. 276); CHATTERJI, IAH, pp. 31, 32, 44.

3) M. WINTERNITZ, HIL I, pp. 591, 593; the same, in *Ostasiatische Zeitschrift* 4, p. 153 ff.

4) CHATTERJI, VA, p. 158.

and tempestuous one—and the latter came riding on a bull.

4. Prior to their amalgamation with Dravidian deities the Aryan gods did not ride animals but had only aerial cars at their disposal. But as soon as Śiva and Pārvatī started the new fashion, the gods as if tired of old vehicles, changed them immediately. The animals came much in demand as Viṣṇu selected Garuḍa, Lakṣmī—his lovely spouse—ordered a blinking owl, Brahmā and Sarasvatī shared a swan, Yama was allotted a buffalo, Śiva's two sons, Gaṇeśa and Kārtikeya, had a mouse and a peacock respectively.
5. In addition to a large number of words, references and vocables used for special names, the most striking contribution is that of the cerebral class of sounds which made incursion both in the Vedic and the Classical Sanskrit. The very root *nṛt-* in Prākrit, implying dance, from which the three terms *Nṛtta*, *Nṛtya* and *Nāṭya* are derived, may, according to KUIPER, be a Dravidian feature [1]).
6. In the later Vedic and entire Puranic literature, *Liṅga*, the phallic symbol of Śiva, became quite prominent. Among dozens of epithets the descriptive attributes *Eka-liṅga*, *Ūrdhva-liṅga* occur frequently [2]). Although the Aryans condemned the worshippers of the phallus and called them deridingly *śiśna-devāḥ* [3]), they could not check its appeal and incursion. Perhaps it was the deeper philosophical interpretation of an 'ever-alert-creative-force', finding repose in '*Yoni*', which captivated their mind. Soon it became a popular form of worship and temples from Cape Comorin to Kashmir were found full of these vital symbols, signifying the force of the creative law in the Universe.

The origin and development of *Liṅga* cult in India is enveloped in a web of mystery. The legendary account furnished by Liṅga-Purāṇa and other works of the Purāṇic age give a confused account of its origin [4]), which does not help in building a definite chronology. But there should not be much hesitation in accepting that the *Liṅga* cult, in whatever form, was prevalent in the

1) See F. B. J. KUIPER, in *Ind. Linguistics* 16 (1955), p. 104 f.; also MAYRHOFER, *Etymological Sanskrit Dictionary*, II, p. 127 and 177.
2) CHATTERJI, VA, p. 163; DE, IAC, 4 (1956), p. 273.
3) ṚV. VII. 21.5 and X.99.3.
4) WINTERNITZ, HIL I, p. 569, fn. 2.

Indus Valley. It is likely that, as with the phallic dances of Greece and Mexico, the phallic worship in India may be related to the drama. GHOSH [1]) feels that, although the Indus people had a phallic deity and had also possessed a bronze statuette of a nude female dancer, we have no conclusive means of connecting the two, though the possibility of such a connection cannot be altogether ruled out.

Strangely enough, there are no references to the phallic character of Śiva in the Ṛgveda and the other Saṃhitās. On the other hand the seers condemned the non-Aryans in unmistakable terms, which is a proof that the cult was practised in non-Aryan circles and that its beginning is hidden in the layers of prehistoric times. Conforming to the Aryan disapproval, poets like KĀLIDĀSA, ŚŪDRAKA and BHAVABHŪTI, in spite of their staunch devotion to Śiva, refrained from dwelling on this aspect of the god. The tradition records that even a genius like KĀLIDĀSA earned enough censure [2]) for his profane narration of the amorous dalliance of Śiva and Pārvatī in canto viii of the Kumārasambhava, though the authorship of the cantos viii onwards is still a matter of contention. Earlier, the great Buddha banned the entry of monks in Prekṣās [3]), as those contained elements of obscenity. Similarly AŚOKA stopped the holding of *Samājas* [4]) and BHARATA forbade the enactment of obscene scenes on the stage [5]). This may prove that despite the incursion of the *Liṅga* cult in the Aryan fold, its entry was confined to the religious field only where it represented the productive and creative principle of nature as embodied in Śiva.

The suggestion that the condemnation of the phallic worship in the Ṛgveda is only a tirade against lustful and sensuous persons, is far from convincing [6]). The tone and the context clearly

1) M. M. GHOSH, *History of Hindu Drama*, Calcutta (1957), p. 6.

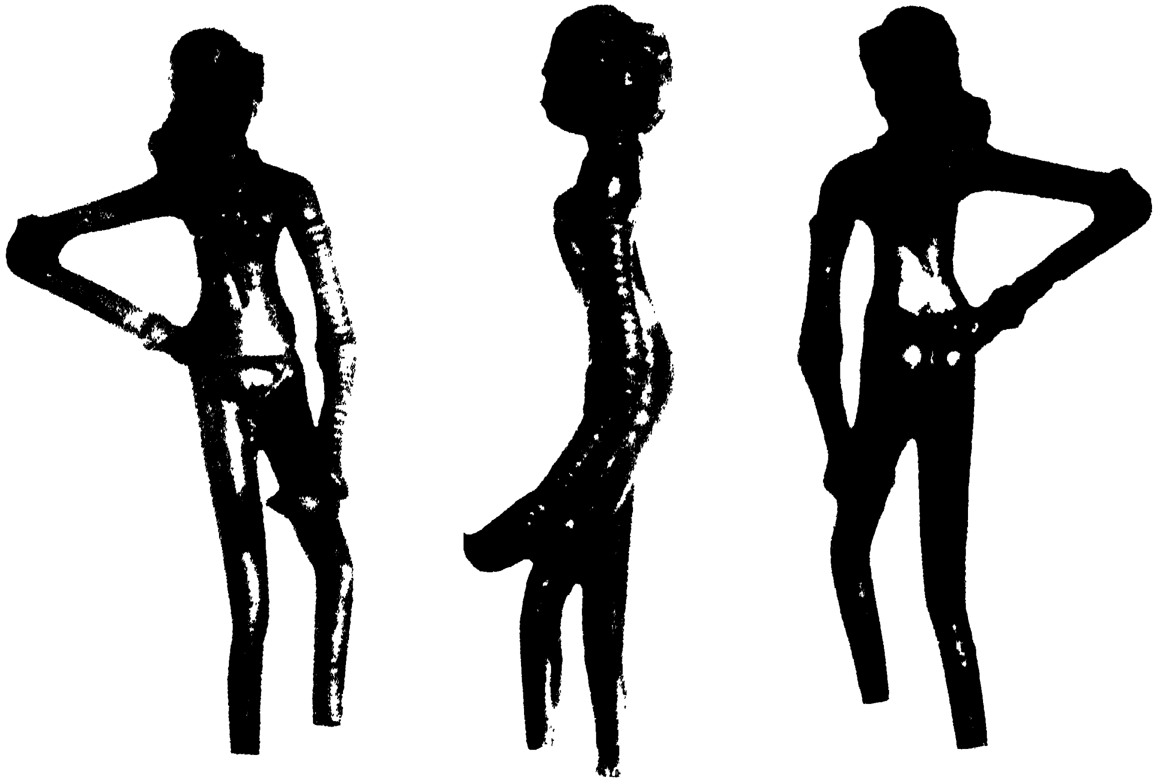
2) In *Dhvanyāloka* III. 6, ĀNANDAVARDHANA says that critics considered it wrong that KĀLIDĀSA should have described the love of two deities.

3) HILLEBRANDT, AID, p. 10. According to *Brahmajālasutta*, the term used was *viśūkadassanam*, which includes *naccaṃ*, *gītaṃ*, *vāditaṃ*, *pekkhaṃ*, *ākkhānaṃ*, *panissāraṃ*, *vetālaṃ*, *sobhānagarakaṃ*, etc.

4) Girnar Rock edict No. 1.

5) NS K.M., XXIV, 280-83.

6) A. D. PUSALKAR, '*Śiśnadeva in the Ṛgveda and phallus worship in the Indus Valley*', in Sarūpa-Bhāratī, Hoshiarpur (1957), pp. 49-54. I do not



a

Figurine of the dancing girl
Mohenjo-daro

b

Statuette of a Three-horned god surrounded by beasts
Mohenjo-daro

PLATE II

Rukminī Devī in a Bharatanāṭyam pose

shows that the seers scoffed and jeered at those pre-Aryans who in addition to phallic worship were guilty of speaking harsh sounds and had ugly features. In one of the stanzas of the Ṛgveda phallic worshippers are reported to be dwellers in forts with a hundred gates [1]), who could be none other than the Dāsas.

7. In addition to the above traits, art and architecture in constructing temples, the philosophy of the transmigration of souls, the wearing of *dhotī* and *sārī*, the use of *tilaka* or sandal paste on the forehead and many other features, are all believed to be remnants of the non-Aryan culture [2]).

The Importance of Tantric Traditions in the Evolution of Drama

The problem of the origin of the Sanskrit drama has been the subject of a long controversy and sustained study. But very rarely the importance of Tantric traditions in the evolution of drama is suggested and recognised. As the use of gestures for expressing secular and religious ideas must go back to some very ancient source closely connected with primitive dances [3]), the dance gestures which probably acquired religious usage at a later period and are preserved in the Tantra literature, are of supreme importance in studying the evolution of drama. Whatever may have been their origin, the gestures had attained some metaphysical meanings prior to their appearance in the Tantra literature [4]). That sage

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agree with Dr. Pusalkar's explanation in interpreting *Śiśnadevāḥ* as lustful persons or men addicted to sexual gratification. In stanza x.99.3 of the Ṛgveda there is a clear allusion to Indra's killing those persons who lived in castles with hundred gates. This clearly refers to those aborigines who practised phallus worship. Similarly Mr. Karmarkar's interpretation in *Religions of India*, I, p. 82, in taking *Śiśnadevāḥ* as madhyamapadalopi compound and expounding it as '*śiśna-yuktāḥ devāḥ*' (gods who have *śiśnas*), is far from satisfactory, as if the gods of aborigines alone possess *śiśnas*. The term clearly refers to non-Aryan phallus-worshippers who were hostile tribes and whom Indra killed with his might.

1) ṚV. X. 99.3
sa vājaṃ yātāpaduṣpadā yan svarṣātā pari ṣadat saniṣyan
anarvā yacchataduṛasya vedo ghnañ chiśnadevān abhi varpasā bhūt.

2) Chatterji, VA, pp. 164-65; *Indo-Aryan and Hindi*, pp. 45-48.

3) E. D. Saunders, *Mudrā—A study of Symbolic Gestures*, Bolingen Series, New York (1960), p. 11; see also Coomaraswamy, *Mirror of Gesture*, p. 16; Ghosh, NS. pp. 4-5.

4) Saunders, *Mudrā*, p. 10.

BHARATA recommended [1]) the use of gestures in portraying various situations in a drama, presupposes the existence of certain traditions in the field of choreographic dramaturgy. Being an imitation of life or of situations the drama presupposes a developed form of a language of gesticulations, without which the subtle emotions cannot be translated. This aspect of gesticulations or *Mudrās* was further enjoined by the later authorities on Poetics [2]).

That the Tantra cult, recognising the importance of gestures may have probably originated in non-Aryan circles, is further confirmed by the character of the sacred Tantra texts which are accessible not only to the four *varṇas*, but also to Śūdras and women [3]). The South Indian countries, inhabited by a pre-Aryan population, could be regarded as the ideal place for such traditions of *Mudrās*, which may have developed by a long association with the mystic and secret science of Tantra. It was only at a late period that this cult travelled to Bengal and Assam and overpowered the religious field there. The derisory way in which the Vedas, Śāstras and Purāṇas are remembered and the emphasis laid on the importance of the Śivaite texts [4]) positively proves that the Tantra and Mantra cults, observing strict secrecy, could not have had their beginnings elsewhere.

It has been suggested that the Tantric and Mantric symbols must have served as a basis of the gesture language used on the native stage which, of course, was later developed by the addition

[1]) NS K.M., VIII, 10-14.

[2]) On gestures see NANDIKESHWAR'S *Abhinaya Darpaṇa*, edited by GHOSH, Calcutta (1950); also GOVINDĀCĀRYA, *Nāṭya-śāstra-Saṅgraha*, Vol. I, pp. 30-31. Cf.

āṅgikābhinayair eva bhāvān eva vyanakti yat
tannṛtyaṃ mārgaśabdena prasiddhaṃ nṛtya-vedināṃ,
aṅgenālambayed gītaṃ hastenārthaṃ prasārayet
netrābhyāṃ darśayed bhāvaṃ padābhyāṃ tālam ācaret,
yato hastaḥ tato dṛṣṭiḥ yato dṛṣṭiḥ tato manaḥ
yato manaḥ tato bhāvaḥ yato bhāvaḥ tato rasaḥ.

For details see pp. 41-329, 368-532; for a comprehensive dictionary of *Mūdras* and their illustrations, see MARG-Bombay (Dec. 1957), pp. 14-18; *Abhinaya Darpaṇa*, pp. 24-27, 71-76.

[3]) WINTERNITZ, HIL I, p. 587.

[4]) *Ibid.*, p. 587 fn. 2. The following quotation of a Tantra text translated by ARTHUR AVALON (Sir JOHN WOODROFFE) will be found interesting: "The Vedas, Śāstras and Purāṇas are like harlots accessible to all, but the Śivaite science is well concealed like a woman of good family" (AVALON, *Principles of Tantra* 1, p. ix).

of imitative and instinctive signs [1]. It is significant that the oldest and most popular tradition in Indian dancing is that of *Bharatanāṭyam*, which is a speciality of the South alone. Whether this mode of dance derives its origin from sage BHARATA or from other sources, the success of the dance depends exclusively on the correct portrayal of the emotions through the agency of *Mudrās* or gesticulations. It is this prescribed code of *Mudrās* [2] and the postures which have made *Bharatanāṭyam* one of the few skilful and accomplished institutions of dance in the South of India.

Almost all the varieties of the spectacular entertainment in the South are infused with a religious background. These religious elements seek to glorify the mother goddess and are a part of the widely known Bhagavatī cult. The Tantras are primarily the sacred books of the Śāktas, the worshippers of the *Śaktis* or 'energies', conceived as female deities and manifestations of the great *Śakti*, the great mother-goddess. The picture corresponds to the traditions preserved in the South, where most Dravidians live. The language of such cults from ancient times is supposed to be the local vernacular, and the acting-dancing roles are assigned only to professionals drawn from the lower strata of society [3]. Several Tantric rituals are current among these people associated with Bhagavatī shrines. It is likely that such spectacular representations accompanied with Tantric symbols are old remnants of the ancient worship of sylvan gods and goddesses, which inspired the pre-Aryan population and are still current among those native people [4]. Even the *Kathakali*

[1] PISHROTI, *South Indian Theatre*, TOH, pp. 165-66.

[2] MARG, Kathakali Issue, Bombay (1957), pp. 14-18.

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4: "There is no doubt that after subduing the Dravidian population the Aryans must have exercised tremendous influence in the field of art and literature. But the underlayers of Dravidian cult continued to throw up images and feelings based on the early vibrations of pre-historic activities. The utterances of prayer-sounds, the magic formulae, their dreams and fantasies all conspired to make pattern on the new social structure. In the wonderful aura of such a world, the ritual of sorcery, witchcraft and Tantric traditions entered the main stream, maintaining the contact between the seen and mysterious forces of primitive passions".

[4] PISHROTI, TOH, p. 165; NILAKANTA SASTRI, *The Colas*, Ch. iv, p. 76. On evidence based on *Tolkāppiyam* (Puram 335) it transpires that there were professional women called *pānar* and *virāliyār*, who moved in companies. These and others appear to be representatives of the early tribal groups of primitive Dravidians who maintained the traditions of folk songs, dances and other performances.

dance, which is a speciality of Kerala, recognises the importance of "gesture-language" in the arts of dance and acting.

It is doubtful if the Aryans ever realized the advantage of 'popularising' Sanskrit by means of gestures, which are a weak and ineffective medium for helping people to understand a language. Although there was a great and genuine enthusiasm for the amalgamation of two distinct cultures, the suggestion that the priests were not supposed to speak the popular language and must have resorted to the use of gestures in their everyday behaviour [1]), seems far-fetched and lacks any support.

The Aryan Advance in the South

One wonders why the Aryans met opposition in the North alone. The reason was that the country from the Punjab to the Vindhyas was inhabited by several non-Aryan tribes called Paṇis, Asuras, Dāsas, Vrātyas, Nāgas and many others. It was by no means an easy task to subjugate this widespread non-Aryan population, which had the additional advantage of living in fortified places and even in impregnably dense forests. However, once the Aryans established their superiority the task became less difficult. When they penetrated further into the South, their glory had already reached those regions. Maybe early emissaries such as Agastya and Paraśurāma may have softened prejudices and prepared the ground for the growth of Aryan authority. The Aryans too by this time had shed their dry, fanatic and nomadic character. The cultural amalgamation and the adaptation of the Aryans no doubt facilitated the process of the Aryanization of the Deccan.

Before advancing further to the central and thence to the eastern territories of India, the Aryans lived in the Punjab and neighbouring countries of the plain of the Ganges. As recorded in the old literature and supported by later investigations, the main springboard of their activities was the region of Brahmāvarta [2]), comprising the modern Punjab districts of Ambala and Kurukshetra. It was probably here that the bulk of hymns was composed. Before

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1) Pishroti, TOH, pp. 165-166.

2) *Manusmṛti*, II, 17, 19.
Sarasvatīdṛṣadvatyor devanadyor yad antaram,
taṃ devanirmitaṃ deśaṃ Brahmāvartaṃ pracakṣate.

See also E. W. Hopkins, *The Punjab and the Ṛgveda*, JAOS 19 (1898), pp. 19, 28.

moving eastward they established several tribal states, held a series of discussions, and conducted their assemblies here. However, it is curious to note that they left no trace of any early aesthetic traditions, no legacy in the field of fine arts of dance and drama. No traditions of stage or any spectacular demonstrations were, as far as we know, established in these regions, which undoubtedly had remained the strongest foothold of the Aryan confederacy. The vast mass of Vedic literature, though full of expressions of vibrant joy and gaiety at the sight of the lovely dawn, seldom records any account which may prove that the early settler, influenced by the maddening Soma, permitted himself the spontaneous treat of a dance, much less a dramatic performance. While enumerating the wide range of professions and pastimes, the Vedic seers very rarely [1] refer to dance and drama, which perhaps were not on their approved list of healthy pursuits. On the contrary, from Indus to the South, the Dravidian countries are noted as rich pulsating fields of dance-drama activities.

It would not be unreasonable to assume that the Southern merchants, who carried on a brisk trade with Egypt, Sumer, Assyria, Mesopotamia and the Roman countries, had established a prosperous state in which the traditions of arts and crafts could freely thrive. As far as we know the Aryan penetration proceeded slowly in the South and never affected the commercial centres there. It may be conjectured that the prosperous city-dwellers belonging to the trading class needed the pleasures of dance and drama after their business deals. That they extended hospitality to girls of foreign nationalities in their harems, is proved by references in the *Periplus* [2]. Their divinities, the dancing Śiva and the mother-

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1) A direct reference to dance is made only in the following texts: RV. I.92.4; AV. XII. 1. 41 and Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā of White Yajur, XXX. 6. The Ṛgvedic text runs as follows:

'*adhi peśāṃsi vapate nṛtūr ivāporṇute vakṣa usreva barjaham*'. Commenting on the term *nṛtuḥ*, SĀYAṆA interprets it both as "barber" and "dancer": *nṛn tūrvati keśena riktīkarotīti nṛtūr nāpitaḥ. sa yathā keśānniḥśeṣeṇa chinatti evam uṣāpir andhakāraṃ samūlaṃ hinastīty arthaḥ. yad vā nṛtūr iva nṛtyantī yoṣid iva.*

2) NILAKANTA SASTRI, *The Colas*, pp. 82-83, 84-86; H. G. RAWLINSON, *Intercourse between India and the Western World*, Cambridge (1926); E. H. WARMINGTON, *The Commerce between the Roman Empire and India*, (1928); W. H. SCHOFF, in JAOS 37, p. 242. That the Tamil traders visited the foreign countries is proved by a reference of TOLKĀPPIYAR in his *Tolkāppiyam* who remarks that they could not take their wives alongwith since the

goddess, encouraged such 'profanities' in an unrestricted form. From the scanty traditions preserved in the early Tamil literature, it follows that the pre-Aryan inhabitants of the South were devotees and exponents of the creative arts. Further, these traditions may have been strengthened by the arrival of the proto-Dravidians, when the latter were ousted from their homeland. Presumably, while the Aryans were occupied in consolidating their hold and expanding the Brāhmanical knowledge, the peoples of the South sought solace in developing form and presentation of dance and drama, so faithfully reflected in the Sangam literature. Thus, it was in keeping with the tune and surroundings that the dance had its origin under tutelage of God Śiva, who in partnership with his lovely spouse Pārvatī, delighted mortals and immortals by his performance. It may be supposed that one of the main roots of the Indian drama lay in this glorious tradition, which is supported by the early Tamil literature preserved in Sangam traditions.

Very often it is argued that the internal evidence reflected in the early Tamil literature lacks conclusive proofs of its antiquity and that the traditions are not trustworthy [1]). But it is not the antiquity of the existing Tamil literature which affects the problem of drama so much as the existence of dramatic traditions before the advent of the Christian era. Undeniably, the early Sangam works were greatly influenced by the epic traditions [2]), which seems only to confirm the view that although the Indian drama had its origin in the non-Aryan surroundings, it was nourished and strengthened by the epics on which it relied till the last.

It is true that much of the literary and cultural wealth could be preserved in the South, because the country had formed a unique unit, which was comparatively self-reliant and safe. Due to its isolated location, it escaped ruthless demolition and carnage at the hands of hungry invaders. While the much-harassed North had to yield passage to the waves of invaders, the South remained a protected and out-of-way country. However, in addition to this unique situation, it also abounded in traditions which offered scope for the development of the creative arts.

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journey was risky. BNS, p. 423; also NILAKANTA SASTRI, *The Colas*, p. 83. Also see W. F. LEEMANS, *Foreign Trade in the Old Babylonian Period*, Leiden (1960), p. 162.

1) Cf. C. v. FÜRER-HAIMENDORF, IAC, Jan. 1954, 2, p. 247.

2) NILAKANTA SASTRI, *The Colas*, IV, p. 64 and pp. 89-90.

CHAPTER THREE

THE TRADITIONAL DRAMATIC THEORY

It is unfortunate that our knowledge of the early dramatic studies in India rests solely on the Nāṭyaśāstra of BHARATA, which is a canonical work of comparatively late origin. From the contents and the general treatment of the subject it transpires that the treatise could have been composed at a relatively late period, when the epic traditions had given the poets the necessary incentive to systematise all works on the arts and other branches of the literature. As a cognate branch of the general study called 'Śāstra', which perhaps, served as model for the study of Poetics in India, dramaturgy appears to have come much earlier [1] than poetics itself. References to dramatic representations are not only found in the early Brahmanical and Buddhist [2] literature but also in the grammatical treatise of PĀṆINI [3] and PATAÑJALI [4]. There is reliable evidence to prove that some earlier works on dramaturgy did exist as referred to by BHARATA himself [5]. Still, it is the Nāṭyaśāstra alone which is so far the earliest known and most authoritative work on this art. Thus, while the beginning of the science of poetics may go back to remote antiquity, the credit of systematising the loose ends of Sanskrit drama justly goes to BHARATA, the father of Indian Dramaturgy.

ORIGIN OF DRAMA: TRADITIONAL THEORY

The traditional account given in the opening chapters of the Nāṭyaśāstra puts the stamp of a divine origin on the Sanskrit

[1]) S. K. DE, *Studies in the History of Sanskrit Poetics*, London (1923), I, p. 21.
[2]) *Dīghanikāya*, RHYS DAVIDS and J. E. CARPENTER's edition, London (1890) I, Ch. i. 1.13.; see also *Avadānaśataka*, SPEYER's edition, St. Petersburg (1909), II, 24, pp. 29-30.
[3]) PĀṆINI, *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, IV-3, 110-111.
[4]) PATAÑJALI, *Mahābhāṣya*, VI, 4.144.
[5]) NS K.M., VI, 32-33.

drama. However, the entire account is in the nature of a fabrication and the contents appear to have been rehandled freely and frequently. Since the stage was set in the epic age, BHARATA had to invoke the favour of the gods so as to claim the treatise to be regarded as a fifth Veda.

Indra, with the rest of the gods, once approached Brahmā the creator, and begged for a mode of recreation accessible to all classes of society including the Śūdras, as the latter were debarred from listening to the Vedas. Brahmā acceded to this reasonable request and decided to compose a fifth Veda on *Nāṭya*, employing semi-historical tales (*itihāsas*) as bases for the dramatic plots [1]. Perhaps the composition of this Veda gave Brahmā a free hand in propagating the Brahmanical principles through the art of drama. Accordingly, he borrowed elements of recitation from the Ṛgveda, music from the Sāmaveda, the art of representation and imitation from the Yajurveda and sentiments (*rasa*) from the Atharvaveda, and made a gift of this Śāstra to Indra [2]. As the latter pleaded the gods' inability to enact the play, Brahmā looked to BHARATA and his hundred legendary sons. Thus, the fifth Veda was revealed to BHARATA by God Brahmā himself. But as BHARATA had no female artists to present tender and gentle roles, he requested Brahmā for a solution. The creator gave birth to the heavenly nymphs, born accomplished in the art of dance-drama and assigned them to the care of BHARATA.

Thus, when the dramatic art was well comprehended, the first drama was enacted on the auspicious occasion of Indra's Banner Day. But as the play was based on a highly inflammable theme of the victory of gods over the demons, the latter rightly felt humiliated and created disturbances [3]. Under the leadership of Virūpākṣa, their delegation waited on Brahmā. Ventilating their grievances they accused him of partiality to the gods [4]. Like a veteran diplomat the god pacified the infuriated demons and advised them not to feel agitated since dramatic art was intended to meet the requirements of all and sundry. It was designed to provide recreation that would generate feelings of mutual trust. It combined reason with

[1] *Ibid.*, I, 11-16.
[2] *Ibid.*, I, 17.
[3] *Ibid.*, I, 30-31, 64-65.
[4] *Ibid.*, I, 68-70.

recreation, knowledge with aesthetics and morality with physical charm. It was designed to be an ideal combination of all the arts representing various states existing in the three worlds [1]. He ended the discourse by commending the over-all character of the Śāstra in the following stanza [2]:

na tac chrutam na tac chilpam na sā vidyā na sā kalā
nāsau yogo na tat karma yan nāṭye 'smin na dṛśyate

"There is no wise maxim, no learning, no art or craft, no device or action that is not found in the drama".

Accordingly, the next play selected for enactment was *Amṛtamanthana* [3], which was free from the elements of conflict. It emphasised the sense of co-operation between gods and demons in the arduous task of churning the ocean for obtaining Nectar. It is not known what portion or version of the story was, in this mythico-legendary tale, enacted; because tradition also records a version where the gods hoodwinked the demons in the deal [4]. However, Brahmā was mightily pleased and recommended the party to god Mahādeva. Taking advantage of the splendid opportunity BHARATA managed to stage *Tripura-dāha* [5], a play of *Samavakāra* variety, dealing with the exploits of Śiva himself. Since publicity flatters the vanity of gods and men alike, the play was admired by Mahādeva and he complimented Brahmā and the party of BHARATA on their accomplishments. However, he suggested to heighten the effect by introducing the element of dance in the drama, which improved the stage-craft [6].

This traditional account preserved in the Nāṭyaśāstra, indicates:

1. That sage BHARATA had to strive hard to secure a divine origin for the art of dramaturgy. In addition to securing the co-operation of major and minor gods, he introduced several such

[1]) *Ibid.*, I, 71-81.
[2]) *Ibid.*, I, 81.
[3]) *Ibid.*, IV, 2.
[4]) The story is narrated in several Purāṇas, see V. R. R. DIKSHITAR, *The Purāṇa Index*, Vol. I, Madras (1951), pp. 85-87; *Rāmāyaṇa*, 1.45, 14-45; JOHN DOWSON, *Hindu Mythology*, London (1957), pp. 12-14.
[5]) NS K.M., Ch. IV, 10.
[6]) *Ibid.*, IV, 4-13.

elements which suited the likings of the leading gods [1]);
2. That Bharata spared no pains in making NS, a compendium of all the arts and the sacred books. By borrowing different elements from the Saṃhitās, he could float the treatise as a fifth Veda, otherwise it ran the risk of being received indifferently;
3. That the Nāṭyaśāstra was composed to provide relaxation to all the Varṇas and specially for those who had no access to the holy books. Thus, it opened a field for the non-Aryan artistes, Naṭas and actors, who did not belong to the Aryan classes;
4. That the female artistes from Śūdras and other low classes of non-Aryans were probably available for acting when BHARATA staged the play;
5. Possibly, Indra and the other gods refused to take the responsibility of staging a play because the Aryan community perhaps lacked the traditions, actors, and other equipment. So BHARATA defended the honour of the Aryan chief by taking the burden on himself;
6. It is significant that all the plays enacted by BHARATA glorified the actions of the gods, thereby perhaps, he impressed on the priests the harmless character of the dramatic art. But no plays mentioned by BHARATA have come down to us;
7. That god Śiva commended the use of dance which, perhaps, heretofore was not approved by the Brāhmaṇas. The association of Śiva lent a sacred character to this art and may have appeased the non-Aryans who must have felt happy at the inclusion of a god with strong non-Aryan sympathies in the evolution of the Sanskrit drama.

A close examination of the above narrations raises doubt as to why BHARATA had to go from post to pillar for launching his treatise. Most probably, he had doubts about the reception until the work was floated as a fifth Veda. He had to present the work in a convincing form without publicising its non-Aryan points. He may even have witnessed the fate of some compositions whose authors did not seek the 'divine' help! On the other hand if the material was of purely Aryan descent and the work was of sterling quality, there was little necessity to flatter the divinities. Even, if

[1]) NS K.M., V, 55.
yena tuṣyati yo devo yasya yan manasaḥ priyaṃ
tat tathā pūrvaraṅge tu mayā proktaṃ dvijottamāḥ.

the Aryan priests had approved of the art and had developed a taste for it, BHARATA had no cause for fear from any quarter. He could have, in that case, presented the treatise in a normal fashion by invoking the blessings through a *Maṅgalācaraṇa*. Thus, the entire episode is wrapped in mystery and raises doubts regarding BHARATA's identity. Was he a living person of some remarkable distinction or was he a myth, which has survived all these years?

IDENTITY OF BHARATA

Although 'BHARATA' is a famous name in the Indian traditions, his identity as the author of the Nāṭyaśāstra is shrouded in mystery. On the basis of the scanty evidence available in the form of references, it cannot be established if the mythical BHARATA was the same as the author of the Nāṭyaśāstra. The real author may, or may not, have been a person called BHARATA, though he may have been a follower of the mythical BHARATA. The problem has been rendered more enigmatic by his own legendary narrations which do not offer any solid clue to his identity. In the Ṛgvedic period, the Bharatas were a powerful tribe [1]), which dominated in the early Vedic period and apparently may be supposed to have nothing to do with a canonical work on the dramatic art. In the epic age we are introduced to two Bharatas of Kṣatriya descent. The first one was son of Duśyanta who figures prominently in MBH, Padmapurāṇa and KĀLIDĀSA's Śakuntalā. He was a sovereign of rare merits and his descendent Bhāratas gave the name of Bhāratavarṣa to the country of Āryāvarta. Another BHARATA was the younger brother of Rāma, who was a pious person of ascetic habits. His mother is supposed to have hailed from some North-Western region. None of these Bharatas had shown any inclination towards dramatic art. Finally, it is the name of the author of NS, who figures both as its author and as stage-manager. The later tradition [2]) has rendered the task still more difficult by drawing a distinction between BHARATA and a VṚDDHA BHARATA, who are again known by the term *Ādi Bharata*, *Bṛhad Bharata* and *Mūla Bharata* and were associated with the science of dramaturgy.

Judged from its contents and general treatment, NS seems to

[1]) BHARGAVA, IVA, p. 136; see also DOWSON, *Hindu Mythology*, p. 46.
[2]) P. V. KANE, *History of Sanskrit Poetics*, Bombay (1923), pp. 25-27.

have been composed towards the later epic age, but surprisingly enough not a single reference is preserved about the author and the work in the Purāṇic literature[1]. Being the first systematised work on the Indian dramaturgy, Nāṭyaśāstra should have ranked as a work of rare distinction and due recognition should have been shown to it by the critics. This cold indifference to a person of BHARATA's calibre simply complicates the issue. It is not known whether circumstances were against him, or if society spurned him for some unknown reason.

Professor JAGIRDAR's suggestion [2] that BHARATA was a Vedic tribe and the NS was the result of a joint co-operation of the family who in course of time suffered great calumny, is far-fetched. In that case some legend or reference would have found its way into the extant Purāṇic literature. It is significant that while reference to the enactment of the two dramas is made in Harivaṃśa [3], no allusion to BHARATA is made. Had he been a member of some renowed Vedic tribe, his minor faults, if any, of advocating the cause of dance and drama, would have been easily overlooked. Moreover, if the account of NS, when shorn of its mythological wording, is taken to be faithful, the Ṛṣis had no cause to be indignant with him. He should not have been penalised for the alleged unseemly behaviour of his sons. The entire account of the curse episode is loose and incoherent. Since the tradition and the epic texts are unanimously silent about him and his antecedents, this only strengthens our doubt about his descent from any Aryan stock. Then, was he of a non-Aryan origin?

Long before the Aryans crossed over to the South, they had encouraged the process of amalgamation and had admitted the descendants and successors of the Indus Valley people into the Aryan fold [4]. This amalgam became the order of the day when they reached the South and befriended the Dravidian population. There they grafted shoots of the Sanskrit learning and culture and soon became one with the native population. Soon hundreds of families acquired proficiency in Sanskrit and in the Aryan lore. But as blood is said to be thicker than water, the class prejudices

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1) GHOSH, Introduction to NS, p. LXXI.
2) JAGIRDAR, *Drama in Sanskrit Literature*, Bombay (1947), p. 28.
3) *Harivaṃśa*, Chs. 91 to 97.
4) MOOKERJI, HC, pp. 29, 37; SHILOTRI, IATC, p. 35.

must have perpetuated some distinctions in the status between the members of the Aryan and the Dravidian families. Whether motivated by lofty ideals of preserving the purity of the blood or misled by a superiority complex in intellect, the Aryans failed to appreciate some of the excellent qualities of the native inhabitants [1]. It may be suggested that 'BHARATA' as the author of NS may have belonged to such a talented and illustrious family of some non-Aryans. He was a past master in his work and soon epitomized the fruits of his long labour in the present form. This view finds support in the researches carried out by HEWITT [2], who spent considerable time in the Dravidian districts of Chota Nagpur.

Another plausible suggestion is that of KANE [3] according to whom BHARATA may have composed only the kernel portion in the Sūtra or Kārikā form and the rest may have been versified by his admirers or disciples. As the episode of BHARATA meeting the gods and receiving gifts from them, gives glory to the family and the author, this padding up may have been undertaken subsequently. But as the class prejudices were still strong in Aryan India, he and his sons could not escape the stigma attached to them. Such cases were not wanting when celebrities were relegated to the status of *persona non grata* because of such prejudices. AŚVAGHOṢA, the famous Buddhist philosopher, leaped into prominence as a poet and dramatist only in recent times [4]. ŚŪDRAKA, author of a great play, was treated casually and indifferently by the traditional critics.

The fact that BHARATA associates his name with the scene-setter and jester, the musician, the dancer and stage manager and calls them *Bharatottamāḥ* [5], accomplished artistes or actors, indicates his intimate relationship with the group. As an Aryan he would never have associated his name with this group who according to epic traditions and the testimony of Arthaśāstra, hailed from the lower orders. In the concluding chapter of his treatise BHARATA himself adduces reasons explaining why the term Bharata later came to denote the actor [6], which only indicates that being conscious

1) SHILOTRI, IATC, p. 37.
2) J. F. HEWITT, *Primitive Traditional History*, Vol. II, London (1907), pp. 898-899; SHILOTRI, IATC, p. 10.
3) KANE, HSP, pp. 26-27.
4) KEITH, SD, p. 80.
5) NS K.M., XXXV, 11.
6) *Ibid.*, XXXVII, 24.

of his lack of class he wanted to draw a veil over the sore points. It is inconceivable that all his legendary hundred sons were capable of insolence which cost them degradation in society. If they were a Vedic tribe they would have been initiated in the Aryan tradition and a few could reasonably be expected to be well versed in the Aryan lore. It seems rather unbelievable that the Aryans who were eager even to welcome the Dravidians to their fold, should have degraded a celebrity like BHARATA to the status of a Śūdra for all time. Thus from evidence and inference, it is clear that BHARATA could only be a scion of a non-Aryan family of the artistes, who did his best to secure recognition for the members of his troupe, whom he may have even acknowledged as his hundred sons.

Finally the glorious tradition of the classical dance of *Bharatanāṭyam* in the Tamil country, points to the possibility of this being his home country. A careful study of the dance reveals the fact that it closely conforms to the spirit and procedure outlined in the ancient canonical work of BHARATA. Both in essence and atmosphere it seems to be of Southern origin, where it grew and flourished [1]. The Dravidian religious fervour and their traditional artistic temperament jointly helped in preserving these institutions to this day. No other climate, no other region could have been conducive to BHARATA and his activities in dance and drama. Impressed by the quality of his work, the admiring generations out of veneration [2] conferred the title '*Muni*' on him [3].

LATER VERSIONS: ORIGIN OF DRAMA

There are a few traditional accounts preserved in the later treatise

1) FAUBION BOWERS, *Dance in India*, New York (1953), pp. 13-15: '*Bharatanāṭyaṃ* enjoys the double distinction, while being India's most brilliant dance, it is also the most classic. Thousands of years of history here, of course, altered the face of *Bharatanāṭyaṃ*. But in essence and atmosphere, in theory and appreciation *Bharatanāṭyaṃ* is purely and demonstratively ancient. Historically of all-India provenance *Bharatanāṭyaṃ* sprang from one source—the Śāstra, but it is only in Tamil that it bloomed later and it is by Tamils that it has been preserved and practised to this day'.

2) Even a rank atheist like CĀRVĀKA is called Muni by the anthologies. He preached the gospel of 'Eat, drink and be merry' which is summed up in the following stanza:

Yāvaj jīvet sukhaṃ jīved ṛṇaṃ kṛtvā ghṛtaṃ pibet,
bhasmībhūtasya dehasya punar āgamanaṃ kutaḥ.

3) *Abhinayadarpaṇa* (GHOSH), Calcutta (1957), 2-6, 11, pp. 81-82. See also KANE, HSP, Ch. i. 3, p. 59.

which throw interesting light on the question of origin, as contemplated in different periods. These versions confirm the belief that the contents of NS must have been tampered with frequently. The traditional account furnished by the Abhinaya-Darpaṇa [1] of NANDIKEŚVARA maintains that god Brahmā imparted Nāṭyaveda to Bharata and the latter with the help of Gandharvas and Apsaras performed *Nāṭya, Nṛtya* and *Nṛtta* in the presence of Śiva. When inspired, god Mahādeva gave lessons to Bharata in the tender *Lāsya* through the agency of his spouse Pārvatī, and of *Tāṇḍava* through his devotee Taṇḍu. Thereafter, the sages brought this knowledge of the dance to the mortal world. Goddess Pārvatī instructed Uṣā, the lovely daughter of Bāṇāsura. She imparted the art to the Gopikās of Dvārakā, who in turn instructed the women of Saurāṣṭra.

Bhāvaprakāśana of ŚĀRADĀTANAYA records two versions as regards the origin of *Nāṭyaveda*. The first maintains that at the end of the last Kalpa (aeon), god Maheśvara created Brahmā, who created this world. NANDIKEŚVARA was despatched by Śiva to impart the necessary instructions to Brahmā in Nāṭyaveda. Further he advised Brahmā that this Nāṭyaveda may be enacted by BHARATA, and then disappeared. The second version opens with a scene depicting agitated MANU approaching the Sun god, who directed him to Śiva. The latter directed his disciple NANDIKEŚVARA to teach Nāṭyaveda to Brahmā, together with the art of representation. When this was done, Brahmā retired to his sanctuary and started meditating. In the meantime there appeared a Muni with his five disciples whom Brahmā taught Nāṭyaveda. The Muni and his disciples put the Nāṭyaveda on the stage and were admired by Brahmā. Thereupon, seeing the qualities of Nāṭyaveda, the Sun-god advised MANU to approach Brahmā for relief from his anxieties. When MANU approached Brahmā, the latter ordered BHARATA to go to Bhāratavarṣa with king MANU and accordingly BHARATA arrived at Ayodhyā.

The first version of Abhinayadarpaṇa is not materially different from NS except that it emphasizes the point that dancing was first imparted to the Gopikās and through them to the women of Saurāṣṭra, who were famous for their charms and accomplishments in the Middle Ages. Probably the author had a soft corner in his heart

Bhāvaprakāśana (G.O.S.), Baroda (1930), Ch. iii, pp. 55-56.

for the ladies of Saurāṣṭra, who possess a rich folklore even to this day. The recent excavations at Rangpur and Lothal seem, moreover to indicate that the culture of Saurāṣṭra was not unconnected with the Harappan culture. The two versions of ŚĀRADĀTANAYA only seek to establish the importance of NANDIKEŚVARA, who was an associate of god Mahādeva. From this it can be inferred that the school of NANDIKEŚVARA was older [1]). That NANDIKEŚVARA was famous for his views on dramaturgy is further supported by a reference from RĀJAŚEKHARA, who clearly maintains that NANDIKEŚVARA was a great authority on *Rasa* and *Saṅgīta* and BHARATA on the *Rūpakas* [2]).

However, for our purpose it is immaterial whether the art of dance was first produced in Dvārakā or Saurāṣṭra. The main issue is the authority of BHARATA, which remains unchallenged. BHARATA has alluded to his predecessors [3]) several times and his discussion on the *Rasa-niṣpatti*, the realisation of the sentiment, indicates that he was indebted to his previous authorities. Despite the undisputed sterling quality of his work, BHARATA was not cited by the early critics; this shows that certain notions associated with his name hardened public opinion against him.

TEXT AND DATE OF NĀṬYAŚĀSTRA

Because of the paucity of conclusive records the identity of 'BHARATA' had remained a vexed issue, but his authorship of Nāṭyaśāstra is undisputed. It was suggested that BHARATA's position in the field of dramaturgy is analogous to that of PĀṆINI of Aṣṭādhyāyī fame [4]). But PĀṆINI was lucky in getting commentators who took special care to preserve the text while Nāṭyaśāstra has fared badly in this respect. On comparison of several editions and the surviving manuscripts it has been found that there is no chapter which has escaped tampering. It is not known when this process of interpolation began. Mr. KAVI [5]) admits to have examined no less than 40 mss., but was unable to decide as to which

[1]) NS (G.O.S.), Vol. II, Introduction, p. vi.
[2]) RĀJAŚEKHARA, *Kāvyamīmāṃsā* (G.O.S.), p. 1.
[3]) KANE, HSP, 1.1, p. 2.
[4]) KEITH, SD, p. 290.
[5]) RĀM KRISHNA KAVI, NS (G.O.S.), Vol. 1, Introduction, p. 7; also DE, SHSP, p. 23; KANE, HSP, p. 45.

Ram Gopala demonstrating a Kathakali pose

A 'Kathakali' style dance pose, depiciting Mudrās

ms. and which recension could be regarded authentic. The text of Nāṭyaśāstra has come down to us in two recensions, shorter and longer. Opinion is again sharply divided as to which should be regarded as nearer to the original [1]).

On comparison it is found that in the 10th century of our era, DHANAÑJAYA, author of the Daśarūpa, quoted from the shorter recension and BHOJA, author of Sarasvatīkaṇṭhābharaṇa quoted from the longer one. ABHINAVA GUPTA who wrote a commentary on NS in the 12th century, made use of the shorter recension. It is presumed that NS in its present form must have been completed, at the latest, by the 8th century. [2])

Judging from the text, traditions and references, it would be fair to assume that the text in its present form lacks unity of authorship. The first five and last two chapters appear to have been added at a much later date. Since the first five chapters seek to glorify the role of the Aryan divinity in the evolution of Sanskrit drama, these could have been added in the post-Gupta period when the Brahmanical traditions were revived. The same would hold true of the last two chapters where BHARATA vindicates his honour by offering an uncalled for explanation [3]) regarding his descent. Whether the text was rehandled by his admirers or by his own family members, the patch-work was faulty.

Since BHARATA circulated the treatise as a fifth Veda, it may have been recast in the post-epic period when there was great rush to style certain works as Veda or Upa-veda. The Mahābhārata [4]), Dhanurveda, Āyurveda and Gāndharva-veda, all aspired to be styled the fifth Veda. As regards the difference in names of Ādi and Vṛddha Bharata [5]), it seems to have been caused by the scribes or quasi-commentators who took a fancy to different titles and made a mess of the BHARATA legend.

[1]) While the general tendency in such cases, is to show preference to the shorter one, as the process of elaboration is indicative of later period, PISCHEL, MACDONELL and KAVI are inclined to believe that the longer recension in this case is nearer the original (GHOSH, NS, Introduction, p. LXXI).

[2]) DE, SHSP, p. 26.

[3]) NS K.M., XXXVI.

[4]) In the later Vedic texts 'Itihāsa' and 'Purāṇa' were called the fifth Veda, as in the case of MBH. Cf. '*Bhārataḥ pañcamo vedaḥ*'; see WINTERNITZ, HIL I, p. 313 and fn. 2.

[5]) *Bhāvaprakāśana*, Ch. x, 34-35.

It is unfortunate that like his identity, the issue of the authenticity of the text should have remained unsettled. Whatever may have been the nature of rehandling, it is believed that the text existed in the second century B.C. [1]. However there are other scholars who are not inclined to ascribe this antiquity to the Nāṭyaśāstra [2]. Whatever the exact date may have been, it is significant that no direct reference to NS was made before the seventh century. While there is no dearth of references to *Naṭa*, *Nartaka*, *Nāṭaka* and *Śailūṣa* in the extant literature, BHARATA's name has been discreetly omitted. But as the treatise offered an exhaustive study on the subject of dramaturgy, the later writers and poets paid tribute to the author. The commentators and theorists commented on it.

EFFORTS FOR RECONCILIATION

Those who carry the torch of knowledge in their hands, often burn their fingers. In his enthusiasm to elevate the status of the actors and the artistes, BHARATA was, according to tradition, deprived of his own status. Whoever this mythical figure of BHARATA was, he must have borne the priestly condemnation patiently, while occupied in popularising the art among both high and low. But he could not keep the sages pacified any longer, who inflamed by his tactics, declared "You shall lose your art and Brāhmaṇa culture because you are arrogant and ill-mannered. You are hereby relegated to Śūdra status, your progeny shall also be born as Śūdra and will always breed actors and dancers [3]." The entire edifice of divine origin and patronage, so ingeniously constructed by BHARATA, fell to pieces at the thundering of the above curse. How curious that in spite of a large number of admirers of the divinity, none could interfere on his behalf and drive sense into the heads of the Ṛṣis, so as to make them take a mild view of the situation.

A critical examination of the curse episode indicates that there

[1]) HARA PRASAD SHASTRI, JASB 1913, pp. 307-8; GHOSH is inclined to place BHARATA in about 100 B.C., see his Introduction to NS, pp. LXXXI-LXXXIV; M. VARADACHARI assigns him to 400 B.C., see his *History of Sanskrit Literature*, Allahabad, p. 179.

[2]) LÉVI, Indian Antiquary, Vol. 33, p. 163; KANE, HSP, pp. 39-46; L. RENOU, *Littérature sanskrite*, Paris (1946), p. 82.

[3]) NS K.M., XXXVI, 33-35; G.O.S., Ch. xxxvi, 34-37.

was some apathetic attitude towards dance and drama from the very beginning, which BHARATA tried to bridge by means of the divine help. He must have also been encouraged by some sympathetic Aryans who favoured a synthesis of the two cultures and may have been impressed by the art of dance and drama. His troupe must have included dancers, jesters, actors and above all some female artistes, who may have been a source of attraction for the Aryan youth. This theatrical band must have gained considerable popularity by staging semi-divine plays. The performances must have attracted greater crowds than the religious or sacrificial assemblies. It must have grown into a challenging force, influencing the social and moral fibre of the population. Therefore the sages representing the mentality of the contemporary Brāhmaṇas opposed the theatrical performances and had to take recourse to a bold and final step. They expelled BHARATA from this effective field.

Conceding that BHARATA was a great sage of approved merits, what urged him to appease the gods in a humiliating tone? Like a self-conscious supplicant, he hovered around Brahmā and Śiva for pressing his claims. What was the objective behind all these well-considered moves? There is no cogent answer to it except that he ardently wished to better the lot of his fellow beings and to prepare a field for the dramatic performances. The wrathful sages decided to take such an effective measure because such a mode of relaxation did not fit in well in their set pattern. The entire episode sounds like an anti-climax and cannot stand a critical examination [1]. But if BHARATA is regarded as one hailing from a non-Aryan stock, the entire account and fury of the sages becomes crystal clear.

PATRONAGE BY NON-ARYANS

At this critical juncture when BHARATA felt helpless and depressed, he came across a non-Aryan patron in the person of Nahuṣa,

[1] In addition to several incongruities of text and context the curse-episode offers another lamentable inconsistency, which is difficult to be explained. In Ch. xxxvi, 29-30, BHARATA maintains that the Ṛṣis were roused to anger because of some vulgar play staged by his sons, which hurt the dignity of the seers. But in stanzas 40-41, the sons instead of feeling ashamed and penitent for bringing the curse disaster, accuse BHARATA to have brought this ruination because of his devotion to the art of dance-drama.

a Dasyu king of the Vedic days. In Ṛgveda [1]), Indra is reported to have shattered Nahuṣa's fortress while annihilating the Dasyus. What a coincidence if BHARATA who received the highest honour and regard from Indra, should have later been patronised by Indra's sworn enemy, an infidel Dasyu chief.

Earlier Nahuṣa had some squabbles with the Sage Agastya, who according to Tamil traditions, was the first Aryan to have established contacts with the Southern regions [2]). Being a powerful and ambitious non-Aryan king, Nahuṣa may have come into conflict with Agastya as it is recorded in the Mahābhārata [3]). His name may indicate his non-Aryan descent and its 'etymological' meaning may have been considered to illustrate his probable aversion to sacrifice [4]). He must have been connected with some anti-Aryan and anti-Vedic activities so as to come into conflict with Indra and Agastya. The entire account sounds reasonable and convincing.

According to another epic and Purāṇic tradition [5]) Nahuṣa had gained Indra's rank by performing a hundred sacrifices uninterruptedly. Since Indra was not happy in vacating his office, he managed to rouse in Nahuṣa's heart an amorous disposition towards Indrāṇī, his own wife. Nahuṣa was made to understand that in addition to Indra's rank, he was also entitled to enjoy the company of Indrāṇī. Therefore he urged the seven sages, his palaquin-bearers, to bear him rapidly to heaven. Becoming impatient to meet Indrāṇī, he used some uncouth expression and thereby incurred the wrath of the sages. Infuriated and inflamed Agastya threw the palaquin aside and cursed Nahuṣa to be transformed into a snake. Thus, through a cunning strategy of which the Aryan chief

[1]) ṚV. X. 99.7.
sa nṛtamo Nahuṣo 'smat sujātaḥ puro 'bhinad arhan dasyuhatye.

[2]) Syed ABDUL LATIF, *Cultural History of India*, Mid-east Cultural Studies, Hyderabad (1958), p. 10; DOWSON, *Hindu Mythology*, pp. 6, 213-214. On AGASTYA see also A. HOLTZMANN, ZDMG 34, p. 589 and POERBATJARAKA, *Agastya in den Archipel*, Thesis, Leiden, 1926.

[3]) MBH, *Ādiparva*, Chapters 94, 102, 157 and 207.

[4]) JAGIRDAR, DSL, p. 35. The term is a negative compound which as an instance of folk-etymology can be dissolved as '*na hutaṃ yena*'.

[5]) According to DIKSHITAR's *Purāṇa Index*, Vol. II, p. 216, the story finds mention in several Purāṇas. MANU in VII. 41 makes reference to Nahuṣa's degradation, '*Veno vinaṣṭo' vinayān Nahusaś caiva, pārthivaḥ*'. See also DOWSON, *Hindu Mythology*, p. 214.

was always very proud, Indra retained his hold both on the office and Indrāṇī. This legend also indicates that Nahuṣa was a powerful non-Aryan chief or hero and his prowess was so great that in order to subdue him Indra had to resort to unfair means.

In the concluding chapter of Nāṭyaśāstra, Nahuṣa is reported to be in heaven. From the narration it is not clear as to what happened to Indra, the traditional chief of the heavens, who was so active in the first five chapters of the Nāṭyaśāstra. Where does he disappear leaving Nahuṣa in charge of the heavens? BHARATA acknowledges that Nahuṣa obtained the divine realms through his strategy, valour and intellect [1]. He is also called *Svargādhipa* [2], the lord of the heaven. But when he desired the play to be enacted in his house, Bṛhaspati reminded him that it was not becoming of him to transgress the divine conventions. Mortals are not expected to act with the heavenly damsels [3]. It is difficult to explain these inconsistencies of which Nāṭyaśāstra is full.

Thus, boycotted and humiliated by the Aryan Sages BHARATA stood on shaky grounds when Nahuṣa extended to him a helpful hand. Beyond doubt, the non-Aryan ruler must have been a bold person and also a patron of letters, who would not see BHARATA ruined further. He rendered all possible help to re-establish the dramatic traditions and according to the tradition also constructed a theatre hall for BHARATA and his associates. It is a curious incident of Indian mythology that the first patron of the drama in the mortal world should have been a non-Aryan king who helped BHARATA in bringing the art of dance and drama on the earth [4].

DRAMATIC TRADITIONS IN THE EARLY ARYAN INDIA

From the primitive to the most cultured community, all men have retained dance as a function of life. While primitive man combines reality with deity, the cultured dance for pleasure and for the expression of art. As such dance is an older institution than drama, rather it is the oldest drama itself [5]. For, before inter-

[1] NS K.M., XXXVII, 1-3.

[2] *Ibid.*, XXXVII, 6 cf. *'bhavān svargādhipo hi yat'*.

[3] *Ibid.*, cf. *'divyāṅganānāṃ naiveha mānuṣaiḥ saha saṅgatiḥ'*.

[4] *Ibid.*, XXXVII, 23.

[5] G. VAN DER LEEUW, *In den hemel is eenen dans*, Amsterdam (1930), pp. 9-11, 39. Here the words 'primitive' and 'cultured' are used in a strictly structural rather than in chronological sense.

preting the situations by means of language and melody, the dancer seeks to express them through the movements of his body, which may or may not be accompanied with mimic art but certainly are an indication or an expression of joy. Perhaps, at times, the dancer aims to influence the unseen and mystic powers through willing discharge of his energy [1]). Therefore, it would be preposterous to hold that the Vedic Aryans as a whole were completely ignorant of this rhythm of life. While references are not wanting in the Vedic and post-Vedic literature, proving that the Aryans were quite familiar with this institution, there is nothing to prove that they ever patronised it as a well-developed and cultivated feature of their society. Conceding that the sacrifices were occasionally accompanied with dance recitals, there is no evidence to support that it had become an integral part of their social or religious gatherings which could later give birth to the drama. The Vedic seers were poetic and emotional people, who soared high in ecstasy and joy. They were votaries of beauty and charms whether in person or nature. They have left vivid accounts of the objects they admired and hated. When they could admire the graceful charm of dawn, there was nothing to prevent them from admiring the graceful movements of dance. The few allusions to their dancing made in the early and later Vedic literature are only indicative of their parochial attitude to dance, which becomes still more clear during the Sūtra period when the art was associated with Śūdras [2]). As such the Vedic state of dance could not have helped the birth of drama.

While in Greece the drama is said to have originated in the mass singing of chants at the gay festival of Bacchus, in India it had a semi-religious origin from the art of dancing. It has already been mentioned that according to the tradition recorded in the Abhinaya Darpaṇa [3]), BHARATA performed *Nāṭya, Nṛtya* and *Nṛtta* with the help of the Gandharvas and the Apsaras in the presence of lord Śiva. Pleased at this dance performance Śiva added his own Tāṇḍava and the Lāsya form of Pārvatī. The legend and the connotations of the three terms indicate that there is an intimate

[1]) GONDA, Acta Orientalia, Vol. 19, pp. 333-347.
[2]) GAUTAMA, 15, 18; *Āpastamba Dharmasūtra,* 1.1.3, 11-12; *Manusmṛti,* II. 178, VIII. 65.
[3]) *Abhinayadarpaṇa* 2-3, p. 81.

relation between the idea of dancing and dramatic representation. BHARATA and other authorities are unanimous in this aspect of origin, establishing the singular importance of dance in the birth of Indian drama. This view receives support from KĀLIDĀSA, the leading dramatist of the Sanskrit literature, who sums up his conception of Nāṭya in the first act of Mālavikāgnimitra [1]:

devānām idam āmananti munayaḥ śāntaṃ kratuṃ cākṣuṣaṃ
Rudreṇedam Umākṛtavyatikare svāṅge vibhaktaṃ dvidhā
traiguṇyodbhavam atra lokacaritaṃ nānārasaṃ dṛśyate
nāṭyaṃ bhinnarucher janasya bahudhāpy ekaṃ samārādhanam

"The sages describe this as a soothing visual feast of the gods; Rudra has retained it divided in two parts in his own person, blended with that of Umā; herein can be seen the conduct of people arising out of three primal qualities reflected in diverse sentiments; dramatic art is the common recreation of people of even different tastes".

Obviously there is direct reference to dance in the verse, for the statement is made by a professor of dance just before a dance-recital by his student. Although KĀLIDĀSA has referred to the divine origin of the drama, acknowledging BHARATA to be the first stage-manager in heaven [2], he included all dramatic performances with acting, singing and dancing, in *Nāṭya*. The *Nāṭya* form was represented by several persons and *Nṛtya* and *Nṛtta* needed a single person only [3].

As stated earlier, it would be unfair to maintain that the Aryan priests never associated themselves with the dramatic performances. Endowed with rich aesthetic sense they improved the art by introducing mythological themes from the epics. But as the enactment required the co-operation of the non-Aryans in one or other form, the drama may have failed to evoke a genuine interest among the learned Brāhmaṇas. In the beginning the condemnation may have been mild, but with the process of the Aryanization and growing concern for purity of blood and race, the gulf may have become widened. Finally it was not only dance that earned displeasure, but music and the drama had also their share of reproach.

[1]) *Māl.*, act I, 4.
[2]) *Vikr.*, act II, 18.
'muninā Bharatena yaḥ prayogaḥ bhavatīṣv aṣṭarasāśrayaḥ prayuktaḥ'.
[3]) KANE, HSP, I. 3, p. 58.

EVIDENCE OF PĀṆINI AND PATANJALI

Strange though it may seem, some of the ancient authorities on poetics and the allied sciences were grammarians [1]. They explained the various terms etymologically, often bordering on philosophical speculations, and being the god-fathers of the first and foremost subject for study, systematised such branches of literature which fell within their purview. Therefore, it is no surprise to find casual references to the art of acting and to dramatic representations in the treatises of these early grammarians. Of them, PĀṆINI, the oldest, refers to '*Naṭa-sūtra*', aphorisms on the science of acting, by two earlier authors ŚILĀLIN and KṚŚĀŚVA [2]. The Sūtras say: *Pārāśarya-Śilālibhyāṃ bhikṣunaṭasūtrayoḥ, Karmanda-Kṛśāśvādiniḥ*, from which it follows that PĀRĀŚARYA, KARMANDA, ŚILĀLIN and KṚŚĀŚVA are the authors of *Bhikṣusūtras* and *Naṭasūtras*.

The aphorisms as they are, neither establish the existence of a drama nor do they specially speak of any representation. At best, they signify that the two persons, ŚILĀLIN and KṚŚĀŚVA, were known to have prepared a code on the Naṭas [3]. These Naṭas were either dancers or mimes for by that time the connotation of the word *Nāṭya* could never have been fixed so as to include full-fledged dramatic performances. Whatever may be the correct form for deriving *Nāṭya*, the fact remains that the mere reference to authorship of *Naṭa-sūtras* cannot be regarded as proof of the existence of a drama proper.

The suggestion that, while commenting on the above Sūtra of PĀṆINI, KĀTYĀYANA draws a distinction between the two schools

[1] DE, SHSP, Vol. I, pp. 10-11.

[2] *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, Ch. iv, 3, 111.

[3] In all probability '*naṭa*' stands for a 'dancer'. A code for dancers may have been considered necessary because they must have been in demand at social and religious gatherings. In their enthusiasm the '*naṭas*' may have demonstrated poses which may have been regarded as unfit and vulgar for the occasion. See GONDA, Acta Orientalia, Vol. 19, pp. 333-335. HILLEBRANDT's assertion, AID, pp. 5-6, that '*naṭa*' in MBH, XII. 140.21 means real actor, lacks support. It is difficult to place reliance on a late commentary, explaining *naṭasya nānārūpatvam iṣṭam*. Of course there is possibility that the term '*naṭa*' may have also signified a pantomime. However, no hard and fast lines could be drawn between dancing, performing pantomimes and even some sort of elementary dramas.

of dancing and the Vedic studies, is not convincing. No doubt the commentator has defined *śailālinaḥ* as *naṭāḥ* but he never refers to *śailālāḥ* as a term signifying the orthodox school, as affirmed by AGRAWALA [1]). It simply means that while PĀṆINI favours the derivative *śailālinaḥ*, others explain it as *śailālāḥ*.

It is in the Mahābhāṣya of PATAÑJALI that effective and definite references to some form of drama are made for the first time [2]). The two expressions '*ghātayati*, *bandhayati*', have been used to illustrate the occurence of some past events in the present. In fact the expressions exemplify the use of a causative verb when some past event is narrated. GUPTA [3]) following other scholars quotes the two expressions as conclusive proofs of the existence of drama at the time of PATAÑJALI. It may however be supposed that the expressions denoted some spectacular action of killing and binding, which may be in the nature of pantomime scenes, images (shadows?, puppet shows?) accompanied by recitations. According to LÜDER's interpretation the Mah. Bh. refers to recitations which may have been accompanied by illustrations. In any case the text mentions images and persons having a book (*Granthika*) [4]). In fact the succeeding passage in Mahābhāṣya [5]) makes the position clear. It maintains that the above two expressions are cited when the mimes or actors, painters and reciters, depict past events resorting to the use of the present tense, implying that they are describing the events of the past. There is no reference to a regular and full-fledged play as suggested by GUPTA. Further, PATAÑJALI divides the *Granthikās* into two distinct groups, representing the followers of Kṛṣṇa and Kaṃsa. Their faces are smeared with red and black colours so as to represent the events realistically. The authors of a dramatic stage-play never colour their faces or wear a mask, at best they put on some cosmetics to heighten the effect. In the same passage while the actors are busy demonstrating the killing and binding, the reciters are occupied in the act of reciting [6]), which clearly shows that no drama was being

[1]) V. S. AGRAWALA, *India as Known to Pāṇini*, Lucknow (1953), V, 3, pp. 320.
[2]) *Mahābhāṣya*, III, 1-26.
[3]) GUPTA, p. 31. See also WEBER, *Indische Studien* 13, p. 353 f., 488 f.
[4]) H. LÜDERS, *Die Śaubhikas*, Berlin (1916), p. 698 ff.
[5]) *Mahābhāṣya*, III, 1-26.
[6]) KONOW, ID, p. 44.

staged but only some actions were being illustrated. In either case, the passages or the expressions do not establish the existence of a full-fledged drama.

In spirit and form the two expressions of killing and binding the non-Aryans or demons bear striking resemblances to the plays mentioned in the Nāṭyaśāstra. As the drama had its beginning in the epic age, the dramatist was naturally influenced by such mythological themes, which glorified the Aryan conquest and their gods. Killing and binding of the non-Aryans, churning of the ocean, or burning the fortifications of the primitive inhabitants, all seek to symbolize the victory of virtue over vice or of light over darkness and may have even been accompanied by some ritual.

CHAPTER FOUR

ORIGIN OF SANSKRIT DRAMA: MAIN THEORIES

Because of the extreme paucity of conclusive evidence, the much-discussed problem of the origin of Sanskrit drama still remains somewhat unsettled. While no reasonable dependence can be placed on the traditional theory of divine origin as suggested by BHARATA and the later critics, the views expressed by eminent scholars in this field have in no way offered a complete or convincing solution. However, in the light of recent investigations, the main gaps have been narrowed down considerably. Since modern researches in the domain of European drama point to a religious origin for dance and drama alike [1]), some European scholars have been tempted to apply the same principles to the origin of Sanskrit drama [2]). Undoubtedly they were influenced by the affinities and parallels found in the Greek drama, the religious origin of which is obvious and a proven fact. Several Indian scholars, believing in the comprehensive character of the Vedic literature, seek to establish a Vedic origin of the drama. To an orthodox Hindu, the Vedas are an eternal source of all sublime and fine arts. It is this conception that encouraged the Indian mind to relegate all branches of literature to the ever-expanding field of religion. In the light of modern investigations views have sometimes also been expressed in favour of a semi-religious, secular, or a popular origin. Admittedly, the Vedic hymns do possess some dramatic element in an embryonic form and the Mahāvrata and other rites justify some possibility of this origin. But there is no clear and conclusive reference to the existence of drama in ritual ceremonies. Moreover it is not always necessary to establish a ritual explanation of the Vedic hymns which are of diverse character [3]). Too much dependence on the ritual

1) W. RIDGEWAY, *Dramas and Dramatic Dances of non-European races*, London (1915), p. 401 ff.; F. M. CORNFORD, *The Origin of Attic Comedy* (1914); R. G. MOULTON, *The Ancient Classical Drama*, Oxford (1898).

2) HILLEBRANDT, AID, pp. 22 ff.; KONOW, ID, pp. 42 ff.

3) DE, HSL, pp. 44-45: 'It is not necessary, for instance, nor is there any

doctrine restricts the vision and has resulted in showing only one side of the picture. Similarly, it is erroneous to apply the principles of Greek drama to the Sanskrit plays simply because the vast mass of Indian literature does not offer positive proofs concerning the origin of the Indian drama. On the other hand, a religious origin can be successfully established even without applying the Greek theory [1].

Greek Influence on Sanskrit Plays

Of several theories put forward to explain the origin of the Sanskrit drama, perhaps none met such solid opposition as the views of Professor Weber [2] and Windisch [3], who tried to prove that India borrowed its drama from Greece. Weber had only suggested considerable possibilities of such an influence on the drama and the fable literature. His view was vehemently opposed by Pischel [4] but was ably and quite ingeniously enlarged by Windisch. At first sight, some of the arguments advanced by Windisch carried considerable weight. The elements of epic recitation, the mimetic art of *Naṭas*, the employment of mixed prose-verse and Sanskrit-Prākrit language which may be regarded as corresponding to the alternation between chorus and spoken roles, the introduction of heroic and mythic figures, the division of action into scenes, the development of type roles and similar other features, corresponded well with the Greek Drama. Added to this was the chronological evidence which ascribed the first Indian drama to a time when the Greek influence was supposed to be at its peak in India [5]. Because there have existed some Greek principalities in India the possibilities of such relationship could not easily be denied [6]. But the evidence quoted by Windisch concerned

authority, for finding a ritual explanation of the hymns, for neither the Indian tradition nor even modern scholarship admits the presumption that everything contained in the Ṛgveda is also connected with ritual'.

1) See Gonda, Acta Orientalia, Vol. 19, pp. 329-453.

2) A. Weber, *Indische Studien* II, 148; and *Die Griechen in Indien*, SBAW 1890, p. 920.

3) E. Windisch, *Der griechische Einfluss im indischen Drama*, Berlin (1882) and *Geschichte der Sanskrit Philologie*, Strassburg (1917), pp. 398 ff.

4) R. Pischel, *Die Rezensionen der Śakuntalā*, Breslau (1875), p. 19 and SBAW 1906, p. 502.

5) Keith, SD, pp. 58-60.

6) De, HSL, p. 64.

merely coincidences regarding points which are a natural feature of a developed drama. He could not point out any new features not found in the early epic literature. Similarly the parallels picked up from Mṛcchakaṭika establishing the supposed influence of the play *Cistellaria*, "The little chest", corresponding to the title of the 'little clay-cart' were of coincidental nature. The parallel of court-love combined with political intrigue became untenable after the discovery of the Cārudatta of BHĀSA, which is universally regarded as the basis of Mṛcchakaṭika but has no political theme of its own.

The suggestion that the definition of *Nāṭya*, including imitation or representation of the inward and outward circumstances, corresponds to the doctrine of Mimesis, is seemingly untenable; there is essential difference in what is imitated. In the Greek tragedy it is the action which is imitated while the Sanskrit theory admits imitation of state only [1]. The concept of *Nāṭya* as drama appears to have been already settled even before the appearance of Nāṭyaśāstra. It is doubtful if the Indians would have framed their definition after studying the Greek principles of Poetics. The contention of Greek influence on the term *Yavanikā*, meaning "curtain", is well settled now. In Nāṭyaśāstra *Yavanikā* and *Javanikā* [2]) are alternately used and the lexicons have shown clear bias in favour of *Javanikā* [3]), which means 'moving swiftly' and may also be regarded as a Prākrit form of the term *Yavanikā*, meaning a curtain or perhaps signifying a curtain made of imported material. Moreover, the term *Yamanikā*, which was earlier considered a scribal mistake by BÖHTLINGK and ROTH but accepted as a second alternative by KONOW, has been found to be used not only in certain mss. but also in the poems and lexicons [4]). The suggestions of painted scenery at the back of the stage or of tapestry brought from Persia are no more admissible, because it has been discovered that the Greeks had no such curtain [5]) on their stage.

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1) KEITH, SD, p. 355.

2) NS V, 11-12. In KM edition the text is '*javanikā*', while in KSS and GOS the reading is '*yavanikā*', the latter is followed by ABHINAVA GUPTA. This shows that the scribes did not think much of this variation as the sound '*y*' and '*j*' are often interchangeable.

3) *Amarakoṣa*, II, 6. 120 reads, '*pratisīrā javanikā syāt tiraskariṇī ca sā*', *Halāyudha*, II, 154.

4) DE, *Curtain in the Ancient Indian Theatre*, Bhāratīya Vidyā, Vol. IX, Bombay (1948) and his HSL, p. 54 fn. 2.

5) GUPTA, IT, p. 63; KEITH, SD, p. 61; DE, HSL, p. 54.

No special significance can be attached to incidental similarities in employing certain motifs as marks of recognition. The ring episode in Śakuntalā, the clay-cart or the ornaments in Mṛcchakaṭika, the necklace in Ratnāvalī, the employment of a seal in Mudrārākṣasa, the garland in Mālatī-mādhava and Kundamālā, do not strengthen the theory of Greek influence, because such devices are frequently employed in the pre-Alexander epic and in the post-epic literature [1]). In Rāmāyaṇa alone Sītā drops her ornaments giving a clue for her discovery, Rāma sends a ring to Sītā through Hanumān as a mark of recognition and finally Sītā sends back some head jewel to Rāma for confirming her meeting Hanumān. CĀṆAKYA [2]) in his Arthaśāstra recommends the use of these devices as marks of recognition and to ensure safety. Employment of motifs commonly found in both the countries is no proof of one borrowing from another. Moreover, neither Greece nor Ancient India had any civil registration, photographs, identity papers or other official documents; in those ancient times rings, necklaces, etc. must often have served as means of identification.

The suggestion that both in Greece and India the drama arose out of an element of conflict in nature or in ideology, is no argument in favour of Greek influence. Dr. FARNELL's [3]) view in tracing the origin of drama in mimic conflict of the summer and winter, is highly interesting but not suitable to the Indian scene. In the slaying of Kaṃsa and the binding of Bali, it is not the victory of light over darkness which has been emphasised but the capital theme is triumph of gods over demons. It is ridiculous to think that a dark-black Kṛṣṇa represents the light.

While the possibility of such an influence cannot be ruled out, the points raised by WINDISCH and the arguments adduced by KEITH have been deservedly rejected long ago [4]). None of the Greek writers have alluded to the enactment of any Greek plays in India. KEITH's suggestion that ALEXANDER was fond of theatrical

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[1]) A. GAWRONSKI, *Les sources de quelques drames indiens*, pp. 24.

[2]) *Arthaśāstra*, R. SHAMA SHASTRI ed., Mysore (1909), Ch. ii, 21.39 pp. 109-110. While defining the duties of '*Śulkādhyakṣa*', the tax-collector, CĀṆAKYA emphasises the importance of a seal for identity and recognition. Cf. p. 110 '*vaideśyaṃ sārthaṃ kṛtasāra-phalgu-bhāṇḍaṃ vicayanam abhijñāna-mudrāṃ ca dattvā preṣayed adhyakṣasya*'.

[3]) FARNELL, *The Cults of the Greek States*, London (1896-1909), V, 233 ff.

[4]) GONDA, Acta Orientalia, 19, pp. 329-30.

performances arranged during the intervals he snatched from his visitors in Iran [1]), is no argument in favour of Greek influence on the Indian literature. Conceding that the Macedonian king had thousands of Greek artists in his service while in Iran, there is no proof that those must have been marched off to India with him, where he needed his fighting divisions only. After subjugating Persia, ALEXANDER led a comfortable life and even married some Persian princess. But in India he had a tough time, his stay was brief and his troops were eager to return home, which left him very little time for relaxation. It is amazing that despite thousands of artists in the service of ALEXANDER at Hamadan in Iran, no traits of dramatic influence have survived even in the early Sassanian literature of Iran. Whatever may have been the circumstances, the contemporary history has yet to adduce convincing evidence in support of enactments of Greek plays in India. India has borrowed several features from different civilizations including that of Greece and has successfully assimilated them in her pattern of life. As such there would have been nothing disparaging if the drama should have gained something by this alleged influence. But as it is, the Indian dramatic literature has several points of basic difference which preclude the possibility of any Greek influence on the Sanskrit drama. Some of the points can be enumerated as follows:

1. The Sanskrit drama with its romantic appeal is nearer to Elizabethan plays than to Greek plays, which are of the classical type;
2. The Sanskrit dramatist pays no attention to the unities of time and place. He conveniently shifts the scene from earth to heaven and creates gaps of years without hesitation;
3. The character and function of the Prologue or *Pūrva-raṅga* in Sanskrit plays is entirely different from Greek tragedies. The *Pūrva-raṅga* is an integral part of the Sanskrit play [2]);
4. The Indian dramatist is more careful about poetic achievement than dramatic justification. He stuffs the acts with high-sounding descriptive verses with scant regard to the audience or the spectators;

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1) KEITH, SD, p. 59.
2) NS K.M., Ch. i, 89-91; Ch. iii, 88-89. See GONDA, Acta Orientalia, Vol. 19, pp. 366-374.

5. Sanskrit Drama, unlike its Greek counterpart, is seldom composed for the masses. The plays were, perhaps regularly, staged on special occasions before an elegant and highly cultured audience, possessing aesthetic taste;
6. Despite some instructions regarding the choice of players and the classes of society to which the roles belong, the author of a Sanskrit play is free to introduce any number of characters, supernatural or even superhuman.
7. The Sanskrit drama aims at imitating the state or condition while the Greek drama imitates the action.
8. The Greek drama had an element of music in choirs and admitted collective singing. The Sanskrit play on the other hand, is content with poetic recitals and lyrical verses. The Greek tragedies do not attach much importance to dancing, which was admired by the Indian spectator.
9. The most striking difference lies in the objective itself. The object of all art in India was the attainment of eternal bliss through the triple agencies of *Dharma*, *Artha* and *Kāma* [1]), precluding all possibilities of tragic plays. Therefore, Sanskrit drama does not possess any tragedy.

In view of the above striking points of difference, scholars have indeed long abandoned the theory of Greek influence. In this connection WILSON's remark made long ago is very clear and noteworthy. Convinced of the independent origin of Sanskrit drama, he observed: "Whatever may be the merits and defects of Hindu drama, it may be safely asserted that they do not spring from the same parent but are unmixedly its own. The science of Hindus may be indebted to modern discoveries in other regions, but it is impossible that they should have borrowed their dramatic compositions from other people, either of ancient or modern times" [2]).

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[1]) Since Sanskrit *Kāvya* does not aim at imitating the action or the real but imitates the state or condition which may be consistent with the objective of attainment of bliss through the triple agencies of *dharma*, *artha* and *kāma*, it has no place for tragedies. The dramatic theory of '*trivargasādhanaṃ nāṭyam*' is least related to reality. Even a later critic like MAMMAṬA of the tenth century makes no attempt to introduce elements of realism in the domain of Kāvya. His definition of poetry includes fame, conduct, wealth, protection from calamity, sweet counsels like one from the beloved and the quick attainment of a pleasurable state.

[2]) WILSON, TOH, pp. 2-3. In his concluding remarks on page 3 WILSON

The Śaka Influence

This also disposes of the suggestion of Professor Lévi [1]) that the Sanskrit drama attained a developed form in the reign of the Śakas. On the basis of the inscriptional evidence [2]) using Sanskrit instead of Prākrit, employment of certain words mainly used for addressing high dignitaries and lastly inclusion of the character of Śakāra, Lévi contended that the drama could have been developed with Śaka patronage only. It is true that the Śaka rulers had an active hand in reviving Sanskrit and their ruling capital town of Ujjayinī was the centre of certain literary traditions, but the dramas do not show any features of their influence. Similarly the terms '*Sugṛhītanāman*' and '*Svāmin*' are used only by later critics and not by Bharata in his Nāṭyaśāstra. The theory suffers from the usual fault of the belief that the dramas were first composed in Prākrit before they were converted into Sanskrit. From the evidence it is conclusively proved that the Sanskrit drama is a product of the epic period and had included Sanskrit from its inception. Similarly the inclusion of Śakāra does not speak of Śaka influence so much. The character simply signifies that people were not very happy with Śakas and the Indian princes kept the Śaka girls in their harems. Perhaps Śakas were singled out for their acts of stupidity and unbalanced character, reflected in the role of Śakāra.

Thus Indian drama appears to have an independent origin and

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maintains: "A perusal of the Hindu plays will show how little likely it is that they are indebted to either (Greeks or Chinese), as with the exception of a few features in common—which could not fail to occur—they present characteristic varieties of conduct and construction which strongly evidence both original design and national development". See W. W. Tarn, *Greeks in Bactria and India*, Cambridge (1938). He is extremely cautious in mentioning any influences on the dramatic literature. For more details concerning Greek influence see Weber, *Indische Studien*, Vol. II, p. 148; Wilson, TOH, pp. 2-3; Keith, SD, pp. 57-68; A. Gawronski, *Les sources de quelques drames indiens*, p. 29; De, HSL, pp. 52-54; Gupta, IT, pp. 8-9.—The Greek hypothesis was at the time modified by H. Reich (*Der Mimus*, Berlin 1903) who considered the popular Greek mimes to have been the model of the Indian plays. This view has likewise been rejected by the most competent Indologists.

[1]) Lévi, JA sér. 9, XIX, p. 95 ff.; Indian Antiquary 33, 163 ff.

[2]) The Sanskrit language was first used in the Girnar Inscription of Rudradāman in 150 A.D. Here Rudradāman refers to his grandfather '*svāmin*' and '*sugṛhīta-nāman*'. Further he remembers Puṣyagupta as *Rāṣṭriya*; this term has been used in *Śakuntalā* and *Mṛcchakaṭika* in the sense of "brother-in-law" only.

growth as an organism that was continually in the process of evolution till the days of its decline. At best, it could, perhaps, be the joint work of the Aryans and Non-Aryans, who in subsequent years jointly subscribed to the evolution of Indian culture.

Traditional Theory of Rasa: the Sentiments

In spite of sustained research, it has not been possible to trace and determine the history of the exposition of *Rasa*, which revolutionized the entire concept of sentiments and their pleasurable flavour. In the Upaniṣads there are expressions like *'raso vai saḥ'* [1]) which prove that the great thinkers of that far distant age had hit upon a unique state of experience in the process of the realisation of God, whom the mystics called by the name of *'Rasa'*. Owing to the deplorably uncertain state of our knowledge of the early phases of classical literature, it is not possible to determine as to when and how the poets started interpreting *Rasa* in the presented and accepted form. Certainly BHARATA was not influenced by the philosophical import of the term as enjoined in the Upaniṣads [2]). He was mainly concerned with that state of aesthetic pleasure which cannot be suitably and adequately defined. No doubt BHARATA must have been indebted to some of his predecessors whom he remembers in the traditional verses called *'ānuvaṃśyāḥ'* [3]). Still the credit of interpreting this psychological process in a dramatic or a poetic composition goes to BHARATA, though according to RĀJAŚEKHARA who flourished in the tenth century of the Christian era, NANDIKEŚVARA was the authority on the exposition of *Rasa* as BHARATA was on the *Rūpakas* [4]).

Who is this NANDIKEŚVARA? BHARATA refers to NANDĪ twice in NS [5]), which proves the latter's antiquity to the author of Nāṭyaśāstra. VĀTSYĀYANA [6]) pays him homage in Kāmasūtra. He is referred to as author of several works on *Nāṭya*, music, and acting [7]). One

[1]) *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, II, 7: *"raso vai saḥ, rasaṃ hy eva labdhvānandī bhavati"*.

[2]) K. C. PANDEY, *Indian Aesthetics*, Vol. I, Banaras (1950), p. 21.

[3]) NS K.M., Ch. vi, 32-33; KANE, HSP, p. 17, 27 and 340.

[4]) *Kāvya-mīmāṃsā*, GOS, p. 1; see also KANE, HSP, p. 1 and 341.

[5]) NS K.M., Ch. iv, 235-236.

[6]) *Kāmasūtra*, Ch. i, 8, p. 2.

[7]) S. KRISHNAMACHARIAR, *History of Classical Sanskrit Literature*, Madras (1937), p. 825; for more details see pp. 825-827; see also A. K. COOMARASWĀMY and G. K. DUGGIRALA, *The Mirror of Gestures*, Cambridge, Mass., (1917) and New York (1936).

of his surviving works, Abhinayadarpaṇa, is claimed to be an abridgement of some previous work [1]). According to a legend recorded in Bhāvaprakāśana [2]) it was NANDĪ who imparted instructions in dancing to Brahmā; the latter passed these on to the *Bharatas*, the actors. According to another tradition [3]) NANDIKEŚVARA was the first to be initiated into music by lord Śiva. It is also stated that it was NĀRADA [4]) who acquainted BHARATA with the exposition of *Rasa*. All these references point to the possibility that NANDIKEŚVARA was an early authority on *Rasa*, whose views may have been advantageously incorporated by BHARATA in his treatise.

The original passage around which the entire discussion revolves runs as follows:

na hi rasād ṛte kaścid arthaḥ pravartate, tatra vibhavānubhāva-vyabhicārisaṃyogād rasaniṣpattiḥ [5]).

This means: "No object can be comprehended without the aid of *Rasa*. Sentiment is produced from a combination of determinants, consequents and the transitory states." In other words, when the dominant or permanent states come in contact with transitory feelings, they result in the awakening of *Rasa*—a complete state of enjoying the flavour. All cultured persons devoted to reading poetry or seeing dramatic representations are endowed with certain permanent abstract basic moods. When these moods are roused by the recitals or dramatic representations, they create a pleasurable state in the minds of the readers and spectators which is called *Rasa*. Thus, in the context of aesthetics, *Rasa* has a technical sense. However, even in this technical sense it retains the basic quality of relish, not sensuous but aesthetic [6]).

In the history of Sanskrit poetics, the conception of *Rasa* is a strikingly original contribution which rules out the possibilities of any foreign influence in the origin of Sanskrit drama. This feature alone distinguishes Sanskrit drama from the rest of the dramatic literature in the world. In conception, treatment and exposition it

[1]) V. RAGHAVAN, *Number of Rasas*, Madras (1940), p. 8.
[2]) *Bhāvaprakāśana*, GOS, Baroda (1930), Ch. iii.
[3]) KRISHNAMACHARIAR, *Hist. of Cl. Sanskrit Lit.*, p. 825.
[4]) *Bhāvaprakāśana*, Ch. iii; RAGHAVAN, *Number of Rasas*, p. 9.
[5]) NS K.M., VI, 31-32, p. 62; GOS, p. 274; GHOSH, pp. 105-106.
[6]) PANDEY, *Indian Aesthetics*, Vol. I, p. 10.

is absolutely Indian [1]). Whatever may be the shortcomings of Sanskrit drama, the latter was primarily dominated by the theory of *Rasa*.

The simple definition expounded by BHARATA was the subject of sustained and endless discussions by distinguished writers on poetics. Although BHARATA is known to be the first exponent of *Rasa*, he expounded his theory with relation to dramatic representation alone, treating drama and poetry as twin sisters [2]). According to him *Rasa* was the essential condition of a drama without which no dramatic representation was possible. The function of the dramatic show was to evolve the sentiment in the heart of the spectator by means of *Abhinaya*, the acting, including gesticulation, movements, expression, costume and emotional demonstration. It created an aesthetic pleasure or thrill 'par excellence', which could be relished by an experienced heart alone. While one is in the process of relishing this supreme delight, all other cognitions disappear from the mind and the state is akin to *Brahmānanda* [3]), identity with the allpervading. This state of realisation corresponds to the katharsis of ARISTOTLE, which denotes the emotional relief afforded by art, especially by drama. In this state a complete identification is reached between the actor and the spectator, all other baser feelings are clarified and the heart is attuned to the object of liquid or a transcendental state.

DRAMA: A SUB-DIVISION OF KĀVYA

Unlike the Greek tragedies which enjoyed an independent growth, the Sanskrit drama came under the overpowering influence of poetry (*Kāvya*) right from the stage of its infancy. Its subordination to poetry in general fettered the normal growth. Even the leading

[1]) LÉVI, TI, p. 417: 'Indian genius produced a new art which the word *Rasa* summarises and symbolizes and which condenses in it one brief formula 'the poet does not express but he suggests'.

[2]) NS K.M., XV, 143, 167; XVI, 4.
evam etāni vṛttāni samāni viṣamāṇi ca
nāṭakādyeṣu kāvyeṣu prayoktavyāni sūribhiḥ. XV, 143.

[3]) *Sāh. D.*, III. 2. For details on theory of *Rasa* see the following: DE, SHSP, Vol. II, pp. 21-32, 135-174; and his *Theory of Rasa*, Mookerjee Silver Jubilee Volume III, pp. 207-253; Dr. SHANKARAN, *Theories of Rasa and Dhvani*, Madras; RAGHAVAN, *Number of Rasas and his Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* I, Pt. 2, pp. 418-582; PANDEY, *Indian Aesthetics*, Part I; KANE, HSP, Vol. I, pp. 340-355.

dramatists were encouraged to lay more emphasis on the poetic achievement than the dramatic element. Only a limited number of dramatists could achieve results because of their balanced handling, otherwise this delicate and fragile child remained oppressed with a heavy load of poetic fancies, multiplicity of verses and an alarming number of figures of speech. The dramatist had to be a poet first and the play, though intended to be enacted on the stage, provided more attraction for mere reading.

Since Nāṭyaśāstra was written with an eye on dramatic representation, it regarded *Nāṭya* and *Kāvya* alike [1]. ABHINAVA GUPTA [2] also maintains the same view identifying poetry with drama. It is sometimes suggested [3] that in the early period drama and poetry may have formed separate branches, which later merged because of the dominance of poetry. Some writers on poetics never refer to the drama as an independent branch. DAṆḌIN in Kāvyādarśa [4] and BHĀMAHA [5] in his Sūtralaṅkāra-Vṛtti maintain the same attitude regarding the separate existence of the drama. Obviously, they treated drama indifferently as if it did not deserve any notice.

Since Sanskrit poetry is traditionally rich in poetic fancy, minute observations and employment of numerous figures of speech, it naturally admits much of artificial and conventional stuff. In short it encourages types instead of living characters and abounds in stock themes rather than admit fresh trends. Very few dramatists have been able to extricate their characters from this moribund state by lending them individuality and colour. Very often the relief is provided only by the scenic beauty which never grows stale. The Sanskrit *Kāvya* carries within its compass the self-conscious idea of art and artificiality, not leaving much room for the display of passions and whims which constitute individuality. As such the poet and dramatist both transgress each other's frontiers unknowingly or rather they do not know of any bordering line. There is so much of overlapping that the drama heads towards dramatic

[1] NS K.M., XV, 143, 167; XVI, 4.

[2] KANE, HSP, II, 9, p. 341. ABHINAVA GUPTA remarks '*kāvyaṃ tāvat mukhyato daśanipātātmakam eva, kāvyaṃ ca nāṭyam eva*'.

[3] Ramkrishna Kavi, NS GOS, Introduction.

[4] *Kāvyādarśa*, 1.31.

[5] *Sutrālaṅkāra-vṛtti*, 1.24.

poetry and the romances betray a conscious effort to maintain a particular style.

The effects of this dominance by poetry and sentiments became more visible when the themes were handled by immature authors in the decadent days. BHĀSA, ŚŪDRAKA, KĀLIDĀSA and BHAVABHŪTI had been individualistic poets, who could depict the characters in uncommon colours. Therefore, the poet made it clear in Mālavikāgnimitra act I, that the success of *Nāṭya* depends on its actual performance. Very few realised the importance of this dictum. Because of their fixed and romantic attitude the poets and dramatists were inclined to create types with no individuality to distinguish them from the traditional lot. Therefore, it would not be an exaggeration to point out that judged from the angle of modern principles, several Sanskrit dramas would remain far below the standard. But these would always be enjoyed for their other achievements of sentiments, fancy, delicacy, elegance and communion with nature.

DIVISION OF DRAMATIC COMPOSITIONS

Sanskrit literature has a distinct peculiarity of presenting the early literary works in a majestic form. It appears as if in India there is no twilight, suddenly the eastern sky is lit up with radiance and dazzling light in the form of Vedas. While most of the literatures in other countries show a gradual growth culminating in advanced development, at the head of Sanskrit literature stand the awe-inspiring Vedas, glorious records of human insight and inspiration composed some thousands of years ago. Similarly, at the beginning of the dramatic literature there appears Sage BHARATA with a voluminous treatise like Nāṭyaśāstra claiming the status of a fifth Veda. How strange it appears that before the development of drama on the Sanskrit stage, a treatise on dramaturgy and poetics should emerge as a guiding and presiding deity. After a closer examination, of course, it is revealed that the author of the Nāṭyaśāstra was probably inspired by some previous traditions and, as already observed, the treatise grew in volume in the course of years through occasional handlings.

It may for lack of evidence not be possible to subscribe to the view of Professor JAGIRDAR [1]) that the NS in the present form

[1]) JAGIRDAR, DSL, Ch. iv, p. 110, 116, 119-20; see also GONDA, Acta Orientalia 19, pp. 332-33.

might have been completed after BHĀSA, ŚŪDRAKA and KĀLIDĀSA. However, it would be preposterous to believe that BHARATA wrote this Śāstra without having any models before him. It is perhaps not beyond the bounds of possibility that the dramatic representations which must have served as models, were early compositions of KAVIPUTRA, SAUMILA and BHĀSA mentioned by KĀLIDĀSA in the prologue to Mālavikāgnimitra. If he was a *Bharata*, an actor, he must have witnessed some dance-dramatic performances enacted in social gatherings or in temple precincts. He refers to several plays with divine themes but, for obvious reasons, was shy of referring to any contemporary play enacted in courtly or popular surroundings. As he was eager to appease the orthodoxy, he could not possibly allude to a normal play, which would have deprived the treatise of its status as a fifth Veda and of Śāstra. Admittedly he could not have mentioned any dramatic representation with a non-Aryan background, but if there were any models produced by the Aryan authors, what prevented him from mentioning the same? Perhaps he believed that as the Vedas do not presuppose any literary activities, the fifth Veda should also be made not to presuppose the existence of any dramatic literature.

It is amazing that while theatre in the West developed the forms of opera, melodrama, ballet, farce, burlesque, etc. after a sustained and long period of experiments on the stage, BHARATA has worked out a division including several dramatic forms, without giving any evidence of having gone through the ordeal of experiment. It is doubtful if all the forms enumerated in the list of *rūpaka*s and *upa-rūpaka*s were related to practice. Despite a long list of major and minor types, the Sanskrit dramatist mainly attempted the *Nāṭaka*, *Prakaraṇa* and *Prahasana* varieties alone [1]. GHOSH [2]) conjectures that these undeveloped form of dramas became automatically extinct with the development or production of proper dramas. It can be presumed that since BHARATA worked out the division probably on the basis of his experience on a non-Aryan stage, these crude forms failed to evoke interest and were extinct long before the growth of the dramatic literature. It would not be unreasonable to assume that some other *rūpaka*s and *upa-rūpaka*s existed and possibly continued to exist among less educated classes, which

[1]) KONOW, ID, pp. 27-28.
[2]) GHOSH, NS, Introduction p. LIII.

failed to arrest the attention of the critics. It is difficult to believe that all these varieties existed in full-fledged form even before the drama grew into a distinct literary branch. The natural conclusion is that the division was to a considerable extent worked out with no reference to existing dramatic traditions.

The later writers on poetics added to the number of *upa-rūpakas*, often offering strange divisions unrelated to tradition and dramatic practice. Of a long list only *Nāṭikā*, *Saṭṭaka* and *Bhaṇī* are, as far as we know, tried by the poets, the rest, about twenty varieties are simply enumerated. It is strange that the later writers on dramaturgy continued to add to the list even when the dramatists were not fascinated by these forms [1]. There seems no justification in offering a long list of second-class varieties when even the first-class remained unillustrated. But as the writers on dramaturgy and rhetorics were ever eager to add to details with no relationship to actual practice, the number continued to grow, though in name only. To quote WILSON [2], "the Hindu writers multiply species very gratuitously and make distinctions where no difference is discernible".

DRAMA: AN URBAN RECREATION

An important feature, that probably goes against the early Vedic people as to their supposed share in the evolution of Sanskrit drama, is their indifference to urban life. In the early stages of their immigration, the Vedic Aryans were more or less a nomadic, pastoral people who appear to have been living scattered in tribal habitations. Under these circumstances the range of their pastimes could have included some folk-dances and folk-music. But a dance developing to the perfection of being a progenitor of the Sanskrit drama warrants a state and level which should be essentially urban in outlook. As mentioned in Kāma-sutra [3] at a much later date, an accomplished citizen was expected to indulge in such recreations as dance, poetic symposia, music and lively discussions, usually held in a courtesan's quarter. These recommendations indicate that an authority like VĀTSYĀYANA recognised the importance of an urban background for acquiring efficiency in the fine arts. The

[1]) KONOW, ID, p. 32.
[2]) WILSON, TOH, p. 7.
[3]) *Kāmasūtra*, Bk. 1, Ch. iv, 34-36, p. 31.

Aryans were, in all probability, a wandering stock till their settlement near Kurukṣetra and the neighbouring country. They had neither cultural niveau nor enough traditions to enable them to pursue the aesthetic arts of dance and drama till they had subjugated the major portion of northern India. In the Ṛgveda there are a number of references which prove that the Aryans held the city-dwelling Dāsas in contempt [1]), who are further reported to be living in fortified places [2]). In all probability the people living in these towns were *'Paṇis'* [3]) who carried on some trade. It may be assumed that these non-Aryan traders had contacts with foreign countries which must have added prosperity to their towns. This prosperity must have helped them in developing the modes of enjoyment and recreation. The Aryans on the other hand may have sacked the cities [4]) of some non-Aryan tribes before they consolidated their position and moved into towns and cities.

Till such period the Aryans were in a position to consolidate themselves, their favourite sites were, mostly secluded forests, river-banks, beautiful dales and valleys where they could pursue their religious activities. Even after their consolidation, the forests continued to remain their cultural centres where the city people flocked for participation in literary and religious activities. Their next settlement was the *grāma* and the *grāmaṇī* [5]), the village chief, was considered quite a respectable person. Part of them left these rural habitations towards the middle of the epic period when we find them living

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[1]) *Vedic Age*, p. 249. Dāsas were called *'anāsāḥ'* nose-less or snub-nosed, *'mṛdhra-vācaḥ'* speaking mixed or crude language, *'kṛṣṇatvacaḥ'* black-skinned (ṚV. I.130.8 *tvacaṃ kṛṣṇam*), *'kṛṣṇa-yoniḥ'* born black (ṚV. II,20.7). Some of the Aryans took the name of *'trasadasyuḥ'*, of whom Dasyus were afraid of, *'dasyavṛkaḥ'* one who was like a wolf for Dasyus. The Aryans made no secret of their contempt for the non-Aryan tribes of Dāsa and Dasyu.

[2]) VA, p. 249. The Dāsas were supposed to live in *'āyasīḥ puraḥ'*, well fortified dwellings.

[3]) VA, pp. 248-249. The *Paṇis* were regarded as arch-enemies, though they were rich and opulent. They are described as cattle-lifters and cattle-owners. Their identity has not been established with any certainty but it is assumed that they were a sea-faring merchant class.

[4]) Out of several epithets Indra is known as *'puraṃdaraḥ'*, the sacker of cities. Even Śiva is known to have gutted three cities of demons and hence he is *'tripurāriḥ'* or *'tripurāntakaḥ'*. See also M. WHEELER, *India and Pakistan*, London (1959), p. 113. Cf. "They (Aryans) were heroic but barbaric nomads to whom city life was alien".

[5]) VA, p. 356; *'grāmaṇī'* and *'vrājapatiḥ'* both signified a village headman. The *grāmaṇī* is supposed to have exercised the civil and military rights.

in the cities and towns. It was in these urban surroundings that some of them became more familiar with the urban arts and recreations and possibly with non-Aryan artists. Before they penetrated into the South, the countries of Kośala and Magadha had probably developed flourishing cities and towns which were the first 'cultural centres' where influences of Aryans and non-Aryans fused. Already before BUDDHA and MAHĀVĪRA appeared on the scene, cities like Vārāṇasī, Kośāmbi, Vaiśāli, Pāṭalīputra and Sāketa were famous for their splendour and may have attracted non-Aryan artists for presenting their performances at the royal courts. We know from Buddhist texts that several skilful female dancers and musicians were kept in the harem of BUDDHA to entertain him day and night. In all likelihood soon after Aryans overcame their prejudices they must have come closer to the non-Aryan population, where they must have become familiar with the pre-Aryan traditions in dance, drama and other arts. This assumption accords well with the later history of Indian regions in the West and North-east where the principles of Sāṃkhya philosophy were first formulated. Later, these regions provided a fertile field for BUDDHA and his followers for their religious activities and finally the plastic arts also developed here at a much later stage. This intervening fusion period must have provided the necessary fillip for the development of dance and drama traditions before the composition of the first Sanskrit plays and the Nāṭyaśāstra of BHARATA.

CHAPTER FIVE

PLOT AND CHARACTERS IN SANSKRIT DRAMA

As enjoined in the treatises on dramaturgy, the dramatist had to keep a vigilant eye on the golden principle of accomplishing three-fold objectives through drama [1]. He had to select a theme and also a set of characters consistent with this requirement. Thus the poetic justice of the European dramatist was absolutely unknown to the Sanskrit dramatist. Instead of unfolding a wide canvas of human life he had to submit to a restricted range of mythological themes which rarely allowed a peep into the complexities of life. He had to select and illustrate one of the four types of heroes [2], whose stock character was already fairly known to him. As drama was not treated differently from poetry, the dramatist usually introduced a queer mixture of natural and supernatural. In short the restricted choice of subject matter and plot denied a free hand to the dramatist.

Judging objectively, one marvels as to what would have been the fate of Sanskrit drama if BHARATA had not appeared on the scene or if he should have written his treatise long after the Gupta period. Possibly one of the advantages would have been a more spontaneous and unrestricted growth of the drama as an independent branch of literature. The dramatist may have erred or may even have presented forms not consistent with the theory of 'salvation through aesthetic pleasure', nevertheless the foundations would, perhaps, have been stronger and the appeal might have been robust. This early composition of BHARATA's Nāṭyaśāstra did not allow the child to gain stature and develop its individuality. Unfortunately the freedom regarded as so essential for the development of the creative arts was denied to the poet in India and he had

[1] *Sāh. D.*, 1st chapter, *'trivarga-sādhanaṃ nāṭyaṃ'*. See also a popular verse of BHĀMAHA:

dharmārtha-kāma-mokṣeṣu vaicakṣaṇyaṃ kalāsu ca
karoti kīrtiṃ prītiṃ ca sādhukāvyaniṣevaṇaṃ.

[2] NS K.M., XXIV, 3.

no choice but to follow the beaten track. No wonder, under the circumstances the dramatist turned to epic for his ideal models and remained oblivious of contemporary life, sacrificing dramatic justice in order to attain poetic bliss.

Nevertheless, this is to be said to the credit of Sanskrit dramatic theory, that it always recognised the supreme importance of the element of conflict in the development of plot. For real drama arises out of conflict. The hero and heroine are made to undergo a period of trials and tribulations before they are able to secure an abiding union as in case of Rāma and Sītā in BHAVABHŪTI's Uttararāmacarita or Duśyanta and Śakuntalā in KĀLIDĀSA's play. But again that uncommon love for details has complicated the elements of plot and development. A three-fold division has been suggested for the proper progress of the action. Firstly there are five elements of the plot [1], then five stages of development of action [2] and lastly there are five junctures [3] which help the action to culminate naturally. The subdivision of junctures is further divided into 64 states, which is not only irksome but also impracticable. Over and above this elaborate classification, much stress is laid on the observance of these details, otherwise the play would be ruined [4].

In the circumstances the dramatist had to proceed very cautiously. Since the drama was read, recited or enacted mostly in court surroundings the dramatist selected such episodes from mythology which would go down well and were often connected with the genealogy of the prince. The princes would naturally have felt regaled either with a grand mythological picture of bygone days or by the exploits of their forefathers. They were not expected to witness episodes drawn from the common run.

It is evident that the rules and regulations laid down by BHARATA were formulated at a time when all branches of study were being systematised and brought under control so as to be hitched to the wagon of ideals. But surprisingly enough, the later critics and poets never show any signs of getting out of the defined limits [5]. The critics controlled the field with unrelaxing grip even after the

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1) *Ibid.*, XIX, 19-20.
2) *Ibid.*, XIX, 6-7.
3) *Ibid.*, XIX, 16, 35-36; DR, I,22; *Sāh. D.*, VI, 75-80.
4) NS K.M., XIX, 49-50.
5) G. K. BHAT, *Vidūṣaka*, Ahmedabad (1959), p. 190.

drama had passed into its declining age. MAMMAṬA, VIŚVANĀTHA, PAṆḌITARĀJA JAGANNĀTHA composed their famous treatises after the leading dramas were already written. Everywhere the great thinkers and writers have reacted to binding regulations. In fact, one of the functions of creative genius is to keep the flow free from stagnation. But the Sanskrit poets instead of showing any sympathy with contemporary social life in all its varieties and vicissitudes, looked to epics and other old sources for guidance. They did not care to introduce new life, new characters, new trends and situations which would have added to the vigour and appeal of the drama.

1. THE HERO

BHARATA and the later authorities on dramaturgy appear to have been obsessed with their love for details which they have displayed amply in classifying the types of characters in the drama. As Sanskrit poetics believes in the overall influence of the erotic sentiment (*rasa*) branding the rest as subservient to the leading sentiment [1], the division of hero and heroine is primarily worked out on all possible aspects of this attribute. Since the drama aimed at illustrating the ideal side of life where virtue invariably triumphs over the dark forces of vice, the hero had to be a symbol of nobility, possessing the attribute of self-control combined with either an exalted, gay, calm and haughty character [2]. With loyal submission to the theory the dramatist had to pick out one of the four models, usually drawn from among the princes, Brāhmaṇas, ministers, merchants and commandants of the army [3]. Of course, the poets were expected to sublimate the characters within their narrow range, for deviations were unpardonable. If a change was contemplated it was to be in harmony with the unity of character. In any case the dramatist was to ennoble the hero even if his real attributes were found incompatible with the ideals. Accordingly, by his masterly delineation and powerful depiction, KĀLIDĀSA freed the gay, frivolous Duśyanta of his blemishes so as to deserve the love of an innocent girl like Śakuntalā. Most of the dramatists selected the episode of Rāma, because the latter satisfied all that

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1) NS K.M., VI, 63; *Sāh. D.*, VI, 10; DR, III, 33-34. Cf. *'eka eva bhaved aṅgī śṛṅgāro vīra eva vā'*.

2) NS K.M., XXIV, 2-4.

3) *Ibid.*, XXIV, 4-5.

was expected of an ideal hero. In the process of defining the aims and objectives of poetry, MAMMAṬA and VIŚVANĀTHA [1]) maintain that the poetic composition must illustrate to the reader or spectator that one should act like Rāma and not like Rāvaṇa. This settled the matter once and for all. After such clear instructions no dramatist could dare to present Rāvaṇa and the like as hero. RĀJAŚEKHARA tried to paint Rāvaṇa brighter in his Bālarāmāyaṇa, but he could not sustain this effort and later subordinated him to Rāma.

Not content with this basic division the authorities introduced differentiating attributes of the hero according to his attitude to his female relations [2]). BHARATA acknowledged that young women are the source of all happiness and the hero is entitled to seek their pleasure [3]). Since ancient India knew the system of polygamy, a hero devoted to several wives was not considered less respectable. It was in no way unseemly or sinful for the hero to announce his attachment to a younger love in preference to the older one. But as marriage was indissoluble, he could not divorce himself completely and had to show courtesy to the senior queen. KĀLIDĀSA's three heroes transfer their love to younger and prettier girls without even a wrinkle on their face. HARṢA being himself a prince, allowed his heroes the privilege of adding younger wives to their harems. In fact this was the usual ending not only of court-comedies but even that of a *Saṭṭaka* [4]). Agnimitra and Duśyanta, are both depicted as polygamous kings by KĀLIDĀSA, yet their attachment to younger girls is considered normal and dignified. In Mṛcchakaṭikā, the legal married wife welcomes the courtesan Vasantasenā with open arms. However, the hero in the drama was often reproached for his faithlessness and fickle tendencies by the older wives. Both Irāvatī and Haṃsapadikā insinuate their disapproval to the philandering attitude of their husband-kings but had to reconcile themselves to the changed situation in utter helplesness. It is only Rāma, who stands out conspicuously as the only representative of monogamy, remaining faithful to Sītā.

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[1]) *Sāh. D.*, I, 2 *"Rāmādivat pravartitavyaṃ na Rāvaṇādivat"*.

[2]) DR, II, 6; NS, 9-13; *Sāh. D.*, VI, 89-93; see also RASĀRṆAVA SUDHĀKARA, Trivandrum (1916), 1.79, 83-86, where the hero or lover is classified into *'pati'*, *'upapati'*, and *'vaiśika'*, the paramour.

[3]) NS K.M., XXII, 142-43.

[4]) *Karpūramañjarī* of RĀJAŚEKHARA.

For the preservation of the unity of character no change in the types is allowed as it may affect the traditional picture. If necessary the changes could be effected in the plot itself [1]. According to their respective natures the hero could be courteous (*dakṣiṇa*), deceitful (*śaṭha*), shameless (*dhṛṣṭa*) and a faithful lover (*anukūla*) [2]. Since these four types could be found in the four basic classes [3], this raises the figure to sixteen. According to their station in life these sixteen could be chosen from the high, middle or low sections of society [4], which raises the number to forty-eight.

2. The Heroine

Still more amazing is the number of heroines, which is no small tribute to the ingenious calculations in classifying types. It fully recognises the polygamous nature of the male and makes concession for the hero's association with his own wife (*svīyā*), another person's wife (*parakīyā*) and even with a courtesan (*sādhāraṇī*) [5]. Bharata adds one more category, viz. the divine heroine (*divyā*) as in the case of Purūravas with Urvaśī. The heroine may be experienced, inexperienced or bold. Further division is possible on the basis of her being the first love or a later love. Another division is suggested on the basis of relationship with the hero which has eight different situations [6]. With further sub-division worked out on the basis of excellences and the possession of various graces the figure reaches the number 128. Since all these types could be selected from high, middle and low ranks, the final figure comes to 384 [7]. The impractibility and inconsistency of this division is well illustrated by the existing types of heroines in the Sanskrit dramas, which according to a generous estimate hardly go beyond twenty.

This elaborate division of heroines based on their various relations to men could only be conceivable in a milieu where women enjoyed

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1) Keith, SD, pp. 296-97; see also DR, I, 15; III, 20.
2) DR, II, 6; *Sāh. D.*, III, 35-37.
3) DR, II, 3.
4) NS K.M., XXIV, 85-92; XXIII, 34.
5) *Sāh. D.*, III, 56; NS K.M., XXIV, 7. Note that Bharata adds another category of '*divyā*' to include divine heroines, probably cast in his mythological themes of '*Amṛtamanthana*' or '*Tripuradāha*'.
6) NS K.M., XXII, 198-206; *Sāh. D.*, III, 72-73; DR, II, 23-27. This division is also based on the heroine's relation with her lover, which may be one of eight types.
7) *Sāh. D.*, III, 87.

considerable freedom. While enumerating the types of heroines, VĀTSYĀYANA [1]) recognises different traits of different countries, making allowance for an active and regular amalgam with the native population. This wide range of heroines is inconsistent with the conception of purity of race and blood. If BHARATA could not secure enough Aryan girls when enacting his first drama and had to borrow the services of heavenly nymphs, how could he visualise such fine shades existing among Aryan ladies? It would be equally preposterous that BHARATA worked out all these details purely on a mathematical basis. Evidently he had a few models before him, on which he could enlarge through imagination, which could have been possible only through his access to a non-Aryan population of women. The later writers, of course, went on adding to the details without even ascertaining if such a division was at all possible or even necessary. It is therefore clear that these authors took also the lower classes of society into account who were likely to be of non-Aryan extraction and whose way of living must have been influenced by that of Dravidians and other non-Aryan groups. They may even have included the actresses and wives of the actors, who stood in bad repute [2]).

The Dravidian pattern of social structure, run on the matriarchal system, offered all possible opportunities for such an elaborate classification of women, reflected in Kāmasūtra and Kuṭṭanīmata. There the women-folk enjoyed better freedom which was denied to Aryan women by the law-givers. It may be observed that there have no doubt always been Aryans who backed out of the obligations imposed upon them by the authors of Dharma. It would not be injudicious to presume that BHARATA might have enlisted a large number of lady artistes in his troupe, who may have provided him with the basic material for working out the details.

3. VIDŪṢAKA

Of highly controversial character is the court-jester or fool, whose contribution to Indian drama varies from poet to poet. Such a character was considered very important, therefore he was allotted a pivotal role in the dramatic preliminaries beside the hero and

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1) *Kāmasūtra*, I.I, I-35, I. 5, 3-5; 54; *Sāh. D.*, III, 76-88.

2) WEBER, *Ind. Studien* 13, p. 492 f.; HILLEBRANDT, Sitz. Ber. München (1914), p. 15.

the heroine [1]). Despite his wide popularity the antecedents of the Vidūṣaka are not of normal origin. According to dramatic theory, the jester should be a Brāhmaṇa of ugly, uncouth appearance, dwarf stature, with teeth protruding, lame, bald-headed and sometime with red fiery eyes. He is expected to indulge in incoherent and ludicrous expressions involving an element of humour. At times he could be ribald, silly and vulgar. He is occasionally expected to refer to his traditional greed for food. He is to act as an intermediary between the hero and his fresh flame of love. In practice, he is subjected to all sorts of indignities by the high and low. He is to be a great favourite of the ladies in the harem. On the one hand he could crack jokes with the minor female characters and on the other he is privileged to be friendly with the inmates of the royal harem [2]).

From BHĀSA and AŚVAGHOṢA down to the latest dramatists, with a few exceptions, all have introduced this character with varying degree of success. The hero, who is mostly a scion of a noble or royal family, needs some associates who could amuse and advise him on critical matters of love and other sports [3]). But it is intriguing to wonder why the choice fell on a deformed and ugly Brāhmaṇa. His other two associates permitted by the authorities are not subjected to such drastic requirements. It is hardly possible that the Aryan priests would willingly subscribe to this institution involving insult of the high-born. Not only is he depicted deformed and ugly, but he has to be greedy and a glutton, habits which are quite damaging to the prestige of the Brāhmaṇas. He insists on being fed well and paid well, the usual traits of a Brāhmaṇa. How could this institution survive when less offensive traits were not tolerated by the priests?

It may be readily admitted that for the proper development of the plot and the character of the hero, the latter needed an intimate and trustworthy friend, who could act as liaison between the prince and his love. As the hero belonged to a noble and high-class family, he was not expected to repose confidence in a low or a minor character or even in an elderly minister, because none of

1) NS K.M., I, 62-63.
2) *Ibid.*, XII, 122-23; XXIV, 106; NS (GHOSH), XIII, 137-42; BP GOS., pp. 281-82, 289.
3) *Agnipurāṇa*, Ch. 339, 39-40.

them could be treated on a friendly level. The low could not find access to the prince's chamber and his harem and the elderly minister belonged to a different age group. Naturally, such an important function could only be satisfactorily discharged by a Brāhmaṇa, the highest of the high-born. Undoubtedly his utility was great but his traits are of a complicated nature and not consistent with the traditional Brāhmaṇical order.

Like the question of the origin of the Sanskrit drama, the origin of the Vidūṣaka has remained a vexed problem and several scholars have tried to link it with the origin of the Indian drama itself. The views expressed by WINDISCH are no more tenable [1]. No foreign influence on these Indian characters is, as far as we are able to see, traceable. This disposes of the suggestion of REICH and E. MÜLLER, who believed in the influence of Roman Mimes [2] on Śakāra and Vidūṣaka. PISCHEL's [3] theory of puppet show was brilliantly exposed by Prof. HILLEBRANDT [4] who rightly proved that it is the Vidūṣaka who came from the drama and not drama from the Vidūṣaka. Believing that the drama first began in Prākrit, LÉVI [5] suggested that a Brāhmaṇa character acting as a go-between for the prince and his love may have prospered under the cloak of religion, who later entered the Sanskrit drama. But the Vidūṣaka does not confine his activities to love affairs alone and it is doubtful if the priests while converting a Prākrit drama into Sanskrit, would have retained a disgraceful institution. No reliance could be placed on the arguments of LINDENAU [6], who sees in Vṛṣākapi a prototype of the Vidūṣaka. The mere fact that Vṛṣākapi had a funny appearance and remained in the exalted company of god Indra, does not justify his transformation into the Vidūṣaka. Besides Vṛṣākapi was supposed to be a Dāsa. KEITH [7] relying on his interpretation of the term Vidūṣaka, *i.e.* given to abuse, sees in him the traits of the Brāhmaṇa lad who indulged in abusive language in the Mahāvrata ceremony. The argument is open to

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1) KEITH, SD, p. 65-66; see also GONDA, Acta Orientalia 19, p. 329.
2) KEITH, SD, p. 67
3) R. PISCHEL, *Die Heimat des Puppenspiels* (1902), p. 17; R. SCHMIDT, *Beiträge zur indischen Erotik*, p. 102; KEITH, SD, p. 52.
4) KEITH, SD, p. 53.
5) *Ibid.*, p. 66.
6) LINDENAU, *Bhāsā-Studien*, Leipzig (1918), p. 45; KEITH, SD, p. 51 n.
7) KEITH, SD, pp. 24-25; 39-40; 73.

serious objections, firstly his etymological interpretation is not convincing because Vidūṣaka means 'spoiler' and not 'one given to abuse' [1]. The latter was hardly his function in the Sanskrit drama. Secondly, the nature of the dialogue carried on by the Brāhmaṇa youth and the hetaera was entirely different from the established characteristics of the Vidūṣaka. The Mahāvrata episode contains much which is more of a magico-religious nature [2]. Even less plausible is Professor HILLEBRANDT's [3] suggestion in comparing the role of Vidūṣaka to that of Harlequin, because of a considerable difference between the two characters and the improbability of any historical connections.

Quite convincing and seemingly cogent is the view expressed by KONOW [4] and supported by SCHUYLER [5]. According to him the origin of Vidūṣaka lies in the early popular plays of the people. The priest-ridden people created Vidūṣaka as a funny Brāhmaṇa, perhaps expressing their class disapproval and thus took revenge on the priestly class. When the tribal plays were taken over by the Aryans, the latter could not replace the popular character and only moulded him by adding more of the humorous side to him. SCHUYLER believes that the origin of the Sanskrit fool lies hidden in the early village-plays, preceding Sanskrit drama. KEITH [6] and BHAT [7] both oppose the view on the flimsy ground that a Brāhmaṇa alone should have been outraged and not a Kṣatriya, who also belonged to the higher class order. The reason was that no feelings of antipathy existed against the Kṣatriya class because the non-Aryans could see that it was the Brāhmaṇa alone who wielded paramount influence in the socio-religious field and stood solidly behind the class barriers. Even the Kṣatriya rulers were under the direct influence of the Brāhmaṇas. This reaction against the Brāhmaṇas existed among the followers of BUDDHA and MAHĀVĪRA too, the latter decrying Brāhmaṇas as '*dhijjāi*', a Prākrit form of '*dhigjāti* [8]', the cursed class. BUDDHA and MAHĀVĪRA both

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1) GONDA, Acta Orientalia 19, pp. 402-03; BHAT, *Vidūṣaka*, p. 14; 88.
2) GONDA, Acta Orientalia 19, pp. 346-53.
3) HILLEBRANDT, AID, p. 27.
4) KONOW, ID, p. 15.
5) M. SCHUYLER, JAOS XX, p. 333 ff.
6) KEITH, SD, p. 66.
7) BHAT, *Vidūṣaka*, pp. 7-8.
8) JAGDISH CHANDRA JAIN, *Life in Ancient India as Depicted in Jain Canons*, Bombay (1947), pp. 139-40.

belonged to Kṣatriya lineage and no Tīrthaṅkara of Jains came from the Brāhmaṇa class [1]. In fact it is laid down in the canons that no great person was ever born among the Brāhmaṇas. Therefore, it was natural that the opinion against Brāhmaṇas was much hardened.

Another plausible suggestion is that of Professor GONDA [2], who relates the origin of Vidūṣaka to magico-religious aspects of early Indian culture. Modern researches in the field of ethnology show that the primitive and cultured both subscribe to the tendency of warding off evil and ill-luck by feeding or worshipping an ugly, uncouth character. An ugly, bald, deformed glutton is considered immune from evil effects of the evil powers, as is still seen in certain societies. The customs of giving incongruous and ridiculous names to children and of putting a black spot on a handsome face, are some of the existing remnants of a once popular practice. This probably explains the reason behind Vidūṣaka's proverbial gluttony and greed, because people fed him well to avert evil. However, even in that case there is a greater possibility of Vidūṣaka's origin, among the non-Aryans who possessed faith in the cult of magic, spells and superstitions.

BHAT's [3] suggestion in tracing the origin from the Deva-Asura conflict and developing the same in successive stages is far-fetched and entirely conjectural. To regard the Sanskrit fool as a legacy of the Asura conflict to which an humorous side was supposed to have been added in successive stages, demands too much of our credulity.

It appears that the origin of Vidūṣaka probably lies hidden in the mists of early dramatic representations of the Dravidians. A forerunner of Vidūṣaka may have been some predecessor of Chakkiar or his type, known for his versatile talents in the Tamil dance-drama traditions. As Chakkiar had a wide range and freedom of indulging in humorous, witty, silly and vulgar stupid pranks according to the level of the spectators, he fulfills all the traits of Vidūṣaka of Sanskrit drama. This versatile fool may have possibly, in a later period, imitated and adopted the ridiculous and funny traits of a Brāhmaṇa when the latter assumed a strong puritanic attitude. It is preposterous to think that the Aryans so proud of

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1) *Ibid.*, p. 140.
2) GONDA, Acta Orientalia 19, pp. 398-416.
3) BHAT, *Vidūṣaka*, pp. 22-23.

their heritage and pristine glory would have willingly introduced such a character which would have undermined their prestige.

Towards the end of the so-called Brāhmaṇa period and the beginning of the epic age, the priests had started styling themselves *bhūsura*, gods on earth. As the gods of Vedic times took delight in being fed well, the earthly gods also expressed their willingness to be fed well and paid well in the form of sacrificial fees, called *dakṣiṇā*. In the Purāṇas and law-books strictures were issued against the non-believers who deprived the Brāhmaṇa of his legitimate fees [1]. The devotee was threatened with dire consequences should he dare to withhold the *dakṣiṇā* of a Brāhmaṇa [2]. This supremacy in sacrificial matters tended to make many Brāhmaṇas greedy and gluttonous. They may have rigidly exercised their birthright when invited by the humble non-Aryans for blessings and conduct of some ceremonies. Because of their ungainly and undignified behaviour, they may have earned a bad name which found expression in the native dramatic representations and other crude forms of recreation. Some of the scenes of this nature are usually put in the Yātrā and other performances of the present day which amuse the spectators tremendously. This comic character must have gained considerable popularity, which later debarred his expulsion from the dramatic personages. The Sanskrit dramatist may have also curbed Vidūṣaka's angularities by adding to the humorous side or even retaining him as a symbol of magico-religious practices.

Whether Vidūṣaka was a legacy of the pre-Aryan traditions or whether he was of Aryan origin, it is inconceivable that a Brāhmaṇa would have willingly played the role of a buffoon. In such matters the priests were quite sensitive and would never permit a member of their community to compromise his position. This role must have been played by a character of a lower order, who may have been a professional. As he was frequently addressed '*vaidheya*' "a fool" or '*avaidika*' [3] "not skilled in Vedic lore", he must have belonged to some non-Aryan institution. In his incoherent remarks the fool mistook Rāmāyaṇa for Nāṭyaśāstra

1) Cf. *Bṛhaspatismṛti*, GOS, pp. 346-47.
2) *Ibid.*, stanzas 136-38, st. 136 reading as follows:
hatam aśrotriyaṃ śrāddhaṃ hato yajñas tv adakṣiṇaḥ
yadi tatra na dadyāc ca viphalaṃ śaktito bhavet.
3) BHĀSA, *Avimāraka*, Act II; JAGIRDAR, DSL, p. 69.

and compared himself to a whore [1]), which again raises doubts about his possibility of having an Aryan origin.

It can be argued that if the character was introduced to ridicule the authority of the priests, why did the latter fail to react? They could have easily combatted the institution. Perhaps, such a step was not considered expedient for many reasons. Firstly the jester never pronounced his dislike of a Brāhmaṇa in an open and expressive manner, he only carried the symbol in a subtle form. In portraying the clownish role, he may have carried away the sympathy of some Aryans too, who may have been resenting priestly fanaticism. The Vidūṣaka as a character never came in conflict with the highborn. Secondly, the Sanskrit drama was never a popular type of entertainment so as to influence the public and whip up a strong opinion against the priests. Stage demonstrations may have been arranged on rare occasions. Later, when the drama was captured by the Sanskrit dramatist, the latter tailored Vidūṣaka into the most inoffensive exterior. It is significant that mostly he was ushered in plays with a social background, which accorded well with the prevailing practise of kings in retaining a jester at their court who in many respects acted as their confidant. His role was never confined to drama alone [2]). He became a part of urban life and as such along with '*Viṭa*' made a humorous and witty companion to the princes. Therefore, in spite of a mild disapproval, the priests could not interpret his presence in the drama as a cognizable offence and the spectators continued to enjoy his silly pranks. The later writers were more concerned with the comic potentialities of the character and must have totally forgotten the antecedents of his early clownish role. Last of all, it was not possible to drop out or replace the character because of his obvious advantages, he could only be rendered harmless by steering clear of the conflict element. Possibly, one of the reasons that influenced MANU [3]), GAUTAMA [4]) and KAUṬILYA [5]) to decry dance and

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1) BHĀSA, *l.c.*

2) *Kāmasūtra*, (Lahore) 1.4.21 and 46, pp. 30, 35; Kashi Sanskrit Series '*pīṭhamarda-vidūṣakāyattā vyāpārāḥ*'. *Daśakumāracarita*, II, '*pīṭhamarda-viṭa-vidūṣakāḥ*'. Also see R. SCHMIDT, *Das Kāmas. der V.*, *Register* and GONDA, Acta Orientalia 19, pp. 407-09.

3) *Manusmṛti*, II, 178.

4) *Gautamasmṛti*, XV, 18.

5) *Arthaśāstra* T.S.S., I, 3, p. 29.

drama, may have been the character of Vidūṣaka. It was for a similar offence of ridiculing the Sages that BHARATA and his legendary sons were degraded. Since the fool's role by itself could not be interpreted as a cognizable offence, the priests according to legendary tradition, decried the dramatic personages lock, stock and barrel.

The reasons that led to the decay of the character of Vidūṣaka are not quite different to and independent of the general decadence that overcame the drama after KĀLIDĀSA. It is true that he drew too much on his stereotyped role but to say that he hastened his end because of playing a pretentious Brāhmaṇa and a social parasite [1]), is not convincing. In fact he had worn off the anti-Brāhmaṇic traits long ago. Similarly, JAGIRDAR's [2]) contention that his increasing association with palace menials cost him his position, is not tenable. Till his last the Vidūṣaka clung to his office successfully and there was seldom an attempt to dethrone him from this functional office. Like other characters of the drama, he had also, while depending on his old antics, grown mechanical and stale and this may have hastened his decay.

4. SŪTRADHĀRA

While advancing his theory in support of puppet-shows being the forerunners of Sanskrit drama, PISCHEL [3]) made interesting observations about the Sūtradhāra, as a string-holder or a thread-bearer of the dramatic performance. Obviously he was misled by the literal meaning of the term, which has been used in a wider sense in the epics and in later extant literature, signifying that the character combined several other functions in his role. The theory suggested a popular origin of drama but failed to point out a Prākrit equivalent for the term of Sūtradhāra or any other character who could have played this role in the popular drama. It is strange that while the dramatic theory willingly ushers in a Naṭī on the stage, it does not maintain a Naṭa as her counterpart but retains a Sūtradhāra. It is clear from references in the plays that the Naṭī was the wife of the Sūtradhāra. The latter combined the functions of director-manager and producer of the play, which is a by no means small

[1]) BHAT, *Vidūṣaka*, p. 173.
[2]) JAGIRDAR, DSL, pp. 69-70.
[3]) PISCHEL, *Die Heimat des Puppenspiels*, 1902.

tribute to his functional importance in the drama. The traditional definition of a Sūtradhāra [1]) is:

nāṭyasya yad anuṣṭhānaṃ tat sūtraṃ syāt sabījakaṃ
raṅgadaivatapūjākṛt sūtradhāra iti smṛtaḥ,

i.e. "whatever is to be performed in a play, has a clue for guidance. One who arranges the preliminaries on the stage, benedictions and prayers, he is known as Sūtradhāra, *i.e.* holder of the clue'.

That the Sūtradhāra was a person of considerable importance is proved by the technical requirements and other qualifications which he possessed. According to the theory [2]), he was expected to be familiar with light literature such as narratives, plays and poetry. He was expected to know several dialects, people of different places, and was also expected to be experienced in dramatic details including the mechanical art. In short he was the chief architect of the theatre on one hand, and the accepted leader of the troupe on the other. HILLEBRANDT's [3]) suggestion that a troupe-leader known as '*naṭa-grāmaṇī*' used to look after the band of artistes of all types, receives support from KEITH [4]). The latter feels that the term denotes that besides other functions, Sūtradhāra was also a teacher or instructor of Naṭas, so as to deserve the title of Nāṭyācārya [5]). He was expected to know the customs, manners, dresses and characteristics of different countries and consistent with his knowledge and position he was also expected to possess some basic moral qualities.

JAGIRDAR's [6]) suggestion that it was the Sūta of the epic age that later got transformed into the Sūtradhāra with some added qualifications, deserves consideration. The term is fairly old as it is mentioned in the Mahābhārata [7]).

sthapatir buddhisampanno vāstuvidyāviśāradaḥ
ity abravīt sūtradhāraḥ sūtaḥ paurāṇikas tadā,

which means 'then the wise '*sūta*', the *sūtradhāra*, well-versed in Purāṇic traditions, expert on land-measurement and architecture,

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1) Though invariably ascribed to NS, the definition is not found in K.M. and G.O.S. editions.
2) NS K.M., XXIV, 93-100.
3) HILLEBRANDT, AID, p. 12, *Epigraphica Indica* 1.381.
4) KEITH, SD, pp. 360-61.
5) NS K.M., III, 91.
6) JAGIRDAR, DSL, p. 38.
7) MBH, *Ādiparva*, Ch. 51, 15.

said like this'. The above reference clearly shows that the term *sūta* and *sūtradhāra* denoted one and the same person, who possessed considerable technical skill and, as suggested by RENOU [1]), like present-day masons and engineers he may have, perhaps, possessed a string for the purpose of measurement. It is likely that because of possessing a string or a '*sūtra*' "thread", the *sūta* was called '*sūtra-dhāra*'. This conjecture is supported by a reference in Mudrārākṣasa [2], where the '*sūtradhāras*' of the town are summoned for decoration work, at the time of CHANDRAGUPTA'S entry into the city. Thus, a '*sūtradhāra*' was a special technician and as such he was the fittest person to arrange the theatrical stage.

As discussed earlier, Sanskrit drama took shape in the epic period when '*sūta*', '*kuśīlava*' and others had developed their art of recitation to a professional degree. The main reciter in the MBH and Purāṇas is 'Sūta', who in all likelihood belonged to a group of professionals of lower origin. In the Vājasaneyī Saṃhitā [3]) of the White Yajur, a '*Sūta*' is employed for *Nṛtta* and a '*Śailūṣa*' for music. In the Atharva-saṃhitā [4]) he is ranked beside a chariot-maker or some other professional worker. In Harivaṃśa [5]), Sauta in company with some courtesans escorted Sage ṚṢYAŚṚṄGA to the city of Ayodhyā, which only indicates that he moved with professional singers. According to MANU [6]) a '*sūta*' is born of a Brāhmaṇa mother and a Kṣatriya father, which contravenes his earlier statement while describing '*sūta*' as a Cāṇḍāla [7]), son of an untouchable. APTE [8]) collected evidence about the institution of SŪTA and opined that he was born of a Śūdra and Kṣatriya couple. All these references go to prove that his origin was of a dubious nature. He was a chariot-maker, bard, reciter of ballads and may have also specialised in the art of glorifying the heroic deeds of his patrons. This function of his life is supported by references in Rāmāyaṇa [9]) and lexicons

[1]) L. RENOU et J. FILLIOZAT, *L'Inde classique*, II, Paris (1953), p. 263.
[2]) MR, Act II, Sc. II. Cf. '*Cāṇakyenābhihitāḥ sarva eva Kusumapuravāsinaḥ sūtradhārāḥ . . . tataḥ sūtradhārair abhihitam*'.
[3]) Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā, XXX, 6: '*nṛttāya sūtaṃ, gītāya śailūṣaṃ*'.
[4]) AV, III, 5, 7.
[5]) *Harivaṃśa*, II, 88-93.
[6]) *Manusmṛti*, X, 11.
[7]) *Ibid.*, X, 26: '*sūto vaidehakaś caiva caṇḍālaś ca narādhamaḥ*'.
[8]) V. S. APTE, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, III, Poona (1954), p. 1697.
[9]) *Rāmāyaṇa*, II, 16, 46 '*purassaraiḥ svastika-sūta-māgadhaiḥ*'.

mentioning '*sūta*' as a synonym for bard, reciter, singer and minstrel. In the period when the arts of singing, dancing and acting were considered profane, these professionals must have huddled together in a troupe-form under the authority of a *Sūta*, whose descendents were later found to have troupes of their own [1].

If there is any truth in the supposition that this 'SŪTA' of the epics exerted some influence on the functions of the Sūtradhāra of the Sanskrit drama, he may have introduced, for instance, the epic themes and perhaps some other elements of dance and music in his recitations so as to make them more interesting. The dramatic shows held in the rural areas of northern India preserve this mixture even to-day. The Yātrās of Bengal have a preponderance of songs besides some epic themes which are narrated in a disjointed manner. Being the main reciter, the Sūtradhāra must have allotted different roles to male and female artistes. From the simple village recitation groups the artistes must have developed into small bands organising dance-drama-musical performances. As the troupe may have been organised by the main reciter, he continued to play the main pivot role even in the Sanskrit dramas. Thus the '*sūta*' of the epic age, perhaps retained some of his characteristics as Sūtradhāra whose contribution to the dramatic art must have been quite significant. Once again, dramatic art, as it seems, was practised, encouraged and developed by a band of artistes, who under the guidance of a leader born of 'confusion of classes', organised these performances.

That the dramatic traditions may have been kept going by Sūtas is well supported by the earlier records of their activities. In the epic age the Sūtas popularised the genealogical and heroic records of the princes through their recitations. According to WINTERNITZ [2]) the authors, bards, reciters and preservers of heroic poetry were mostly called Sūtas. To this DAS GUPTA [3]) objected vehemently, maintaining that the chief duty of a Sūta lay in training elephants, driving chariots and riding horses. Obviously DAS GUPTA is relying too much on MANU's testimony forgetting that throughout the epic period the Sūta's prime job was to recite and narrate the heroic accounts. He was the preserver of the history of genealogies which he recited whenever asked for. It may be possible that one of his

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1) HILLEBRANDT, AID, p. 12.
2) WINTERNITZ, HIL I, p. 315 and n. I.
3) DAS GUPTA and DE, HSL, Introduction, p. I.

defined class-functions may have been keeping up pedigrees and driving the chariots of the princes [1]. The latter may have developed a fondness for Sūtas and have taken them to battle-grounds as drivers since they could encourage the warriors by reciting heroic deeds and reminding them of the glorious records of their forefathers. Unless the Sūtas had been allowed to accompany the princes to battle, they could never have kept an account of the fights and acts of valour. DAS GUPTA's argument resting on a reference from the Atharva-veda is equally unconvincing. The mere fact that in the passage cited the Sūta is enumerated with the chariot-maker or other professionals, does not put a seal on this particular function because equally important is the testimony of the Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā referred to earlier, where the Sūta is supposed to be an expert in the art of dance. From references in the epics and the law-books, it is clear that his functions were many and that his class origin was not settled. That these court-bards remained closer to Kṣatriya warriors than Brāhmaṇas is evidenced by their activities.

It seems therefore to be a warranted supposition that the '*sūtas*' exerted considerable influence on the '*sūtradhāras*' and incidentally some '*sūtas*' may have become '*sūtradhāras*'. In the epic and Purāṇic age the Sūta narrated the genealogy of the kings and their patrons, while in Sanskrit dramas 'Sūtradhāra' introduced the poets to the patron and the spectators. It may, perhaps, be guessed that due to long practice and traditions, his hyperbolic treatment of the introduction may have been resented by the dramatists and that therefore the later dramatists started writing their own prologues in a suitable manner. Perhaps BHĀSA had to cut down his prologues because of these lengthy narrations which may have been a weakness of the Sūtradhāra [2]. If there is any truth in the supposition that the plays available are abridged versions of the original dramas of BHĀSA, then the prologues may have been condensed.

Even if it is correct to say that at a given moment the poets started writing their own prologues, the functions of the Sūtradhāra were not considerably reduced as he still recited the first and the

[1] DAS GUPTA, in HSL, Introduction, p. I.

[2] Contrary to BĀṆA's testimony in the introductory verses of *Harṣacarita*, BHĀSA's surviving plays record a simple and short prologue, which might have been dropped out at a later stage. BĀṆA says:

Sūtradhārakṛtārambhair nāṭakair bahu-bhūmikaiḥ
sapatākair yaśo lebhe Bhāso devakulair iva.

final benedictory verses. It may also be remembered that according to later theoreticians the parts of the *Pūrvaraṅga* (preliminaries) always preceded the *Raṅgadvāra* (which included the *Nāndī*) and were no concern of the poet [1]). In the earliest stage the Sūtradhāra recited the first verse (*Nāndī*) from behind the curtain and thereafter appeared on the stage. In the subsequent stage the *Nāndī* verse being composed by the poet himself was recited direct on the stage. Quite probably when the Sūtradhāra depended on his own stock of *Nāndī*, he may have eulogised divinities and patrons of whom the dramatist and his patron did not approve. Besides, being sometimes less educated and perhaps not conversant with Aryan traditions, he could not be relied upon when reciting his own *Nāndī*. The final benediction of *Bharatavākyam* was considered quite important as there the poet summed up his prayers often in a flattering tone. The verse had to be carefully worded so as to leave a good impression on the patron and the spectators.

Very often it is argued and not without justification that Sanskrit drama is lacking in the lighter aspects of dance and music which are sparingly presented on the stage. In all likelihood, the stage-manager used to provide music and dance wherever necessary. It may be remembered that BHARATA sounded a note of warning that too much continuance of music and dance for a long time may fatigue the artistes and the spectators [2]). As the poets and dramatists were not expected to compose musical lyrics, this function may have been left to the care of the Sūtradhāra, who was competent enough to look after these minor details.

On the basis of the above considerations it can safely be assumed that the Sūtradhāra and his artistes were mostly professional actors of a lower order. It is likely that when the dramatic traditions were well established, members from the higher classes may have started taking keen interest in the art, as referred to by BHATṚHARI [3]), BHAVABHŪTI [4]) and BĀṆA [5]). Since the Sūtradhāra managed the entire show and may even have imparted the necessary

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1) KONOW, ID, p. 24.

2) NS K.M., V, 146-48, 164.

3) BHARTṚHARI, III, 57.

4) BHAVABHŪTI, Prologues to MM and MVC both mention his friendship with Bharatas, the actors: *'nisarga-suhṛdena bhāveṣu vartamānaḥ'*: *'kavir mitradheyam asmākam'*.

5) BĀṆA, *Harṣacarita*, Chapter i.

instructions to the group-members, he had to take any role when an artist was missing or the troupe wanted to economise. In Mṛcchakaṭika he is transformed into a Prākrit-speaking citizen, in Uttararāmacarita he assumes the role of a citizen from Ayodhyā, in Mālatīmādhava the two leading roles of Kāmandakī and Avalokitā are played by him and his associate and in Ratnāvalī he plays the role of minister Yaugandharāyaṇa.

Another actor who sometimes replaces the Sūtradhāra is the *Sthāpaka*, the establisher or the assistant organiser. Though BHARATA [1]) maintains a slight distinction between the functional duties of the two characters, the later writers have amalgamated them because their functions were not considered very different from each other. Perhaps BHARATA had a weakness for lavish details and elaborateness, therefore he retained both of them in the function of preliminaries, divided into several small parts. However, the later writers economised the cast and ABHINAVAGUPTA [2]) treated Sthāpaka and Sūtradhāra one and the same.

5. THE ROLE OF THE NAṬĪ

Compared to the Sūtradhāra, the role of the Naṭī or actress is absolutely minor but her occurrence in Sanskrit drama is of no small significance. Despite BHARATA's clear recommendations to effect economy in the allotment of roles, Naṭī secures a permanent place in the introductory part of the plays, though she is only expected to utter a few sentences.

6. THE POSITION OF ACTORS AND ARTISTES IN ANCIENT INDIA

Notwithstanding the suggestion that the Vedic hymns contain much by way of dramatic element, very few allusions to the professions of actor and dancer are found in the Vedic texts. It was PĀṆINI who made a clear reference to the Naṭa in 'Aṣṭādhyāyī', though the terms '*naṭa*', '*śailūṣa*' and '*nartaka*' find mention in the Rāmāyaṇa [3]) and the Mahābhārata [4]). As the Harivaṃśa is considered to have belonged to later times references to two dra-

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1) NS K.M., XXIV, 101-03; V, 103, 150-52; *Sāh. D.*, VI, 26.
2) *Abhinava Bharatī*, (GOS), V, 167: '*Sūtradhāraḥ eva sthāpakaḥ*'.
3) *Rāmāyaṇa*, II, 67, 15.
4) HILLEBRANDT, AID, p. 4; see also HOPKINS, *Great Epic of India, Its Character and Origin*, New York (1902), p. 54 ff.

matic performances made there cannot be regarded as proofs of their antiquity. From the foregoing chapters it can now be assumed that before the Aryans took the themes from the epics and developed them into a regular dramatic form, there existed some native traditions among the non-Aryans which seemingly contributed a good deal to the evolution of Sanskrit drama. By the time the Aryans penetrated into the southern regions, the fine arts of dance, music and acting seem to have been present there in some form [1]. The use of gesture-languages adding to the subtleties of dancing and as a means of communication had already developed even before the Kuttu traditions of dance and drama were established [2]. Due to the variety and complexity of themes a large number of characters may have joined the professional cadre, which gradually developed into distinctive professional groups [3]. As there was a heavy demand for professionals at the royal courts and at the houses of well-to-do persons, the bards, singers and actors formed their unions or guilds. But everywhere the artist had to pay a price for his pursuits and the possession of histrionic talents. In the ancient Dravidian India too, he had to suffer hunger and poverty. There were occasions of cruel irony when instead of food and clothing they received precious stones and metals. In one of the earliest Tamil works there is a traditional account of an actor who makes interesting remarks about some gifts given by a Cola king [4]. He says "The Cola king showered on us great quantities of wealth in fine and costly jewels not suited to us. On seeing this some among the large group of my kinsfolk, used to abject poverty, put on their ears ornaments meant for the fingers, others wore on their fingers things meant for the waist, yet others adorned the waist with ornaments properly worn on the neck". The account has an element of hyperbole in it, but it indicates that the position of these artistes was miserable.

One of the characters of the South Indian stage was Chakkiar, who on one hand represented the tradition of bards and dancers and on the other combined all the elements of a Vidūṣaka. This Chakkiar was supposed to be well-versed in mythological stories

[1] PISHROTI, *South Indian Theatre*, TOH, p. 167 f.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 166.
[3] VARADRAJAN, BNS, p. 421-22; NILAKANTA SASTRI, *The Colas*, pp. 73-74.
[4] NILAKANTA SASTRI, *The Colas*, p. 76; BERYL DE ZOETE, *The Other Mind, A Study of Dance and Life in South India*, London (1953), p. 148.

and often combined his recitations with humour and satire. In the third canto of Shilappadikāram there is a reference to a dance item performed by a Chakkiar in honour of a Chera king. An interesting account of a Chakkiar's versatile genius is recorded by BERYL DE ZOETE [1]) in her accounts of dance traditions in the South. These references, the earliest of which are mentioned in the Sangam literature may be taken as proof in favour of well-developed traditions in various arts. In the course of years the bards, singers and dancers were treated as emblems of immorality due to increasing Jain and Buddhistic influences [2]). The Jain monks condemned all recreation and censured the actors in very strong terms, which influenced the attitude of the royal courts.

In contrast to the healthy atmosphere of the Vedic age the epic and post-epic period was marked with growing Brāhmaṇical influences in the shape of funny laws of morality disapproving of the pursuits of music, dance and acting, which affected the prestige of the actors including that of *Naṭa*s and bards. The condemnation touched a peak when authorities like KAUṬILYA [3]) declared singing and dancing occupations of Śūdras and castigated some other allied arts as well. ĀPASTAMBA [4]) forbade a student's entry into a *Sabhā* or a *Samāja* and exhorted him not to witness any dancing. MANU [5]), the leading Law-giver, censured the wife of an actor as a woman of easy virtue and prohibited students from studying the art of dance, music and singing. BṚHASPATI [6]) censuring these arts assigned dancing and singing to Śūdras alone. GAUTAMA [7]) threatened the Brāhmaṇas with dire consequences of expulsion from the sacrifices and other religious functions, if they are detected singing, dancing or even playing a musical instrument. In Mahābhārata [8]) only Śūdras were recommended to impersonate female roles and

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[1]) BERYL DE ZOETE, TOM, p. 251. For further details concerning Chakkiar's character see pp. 251-254. See also K. BHARATHA IYER, *Kathakali*, London (1955), pp. 13-17.

[2]) VARADARAJAN, BNS, p. 422.

[3]) *Arthaśāstra* T.S.S., I, 3, p. 29, "*Śūdrasya dvijāti-suśrūṣā-vārtā-kāru-kuśīlava-karma ca*". For further references see 1, 12, pp. 58-59; Pt. II, 3, 7, p. 44; 3, 13, p. 84; 4, 1, p. 123; 5, 3, p. 204; 7, 17, p. 354.

[4]) *Āpastamba Dharmasūtra*, I.1.3.11-12.

[5]) *Manusmṛti*, VIII, 362; II, 178.

[6]) *Bṛhaspatismṛti*, V, 30, p. 304.

[7]) *Gautamasmṛti*, XV, 18.

[8]) MBH, *Śāntiparva*, Ch. 295, 4-5.

arrange the dumb shows. In the strongest language KAUṬILYA [1]) declared bards and actors as untouchables belonging to one of the seven classes of Antyajas, the low-born. When BHARATA made a valiant bid to redeem the status of these artistes and of the dramatic art, he had to court degradation. *Cāraṇa* [2]), who according to BHARATA occupied a pivot role, was discredited with his wife. These instances, which can be multiplied from the Smṛtis and Sūtra literature, conclusively establish the disapproval of dance and drama by the orthodox [3]). It was this attitude which must have shaken the very foundations of dramatic art in its early stages.

It may be a pure coincidence that the word *kuśīlava*, synonym for bard and actor, was perhaps coined after the name of the twin sons of Sītā, who earned a great reputation as reciters of Rāmāyaṇa under the guidance of Sage VĀLMĪKI. When the opposition to bards and actors stiffened, the term was interpreted in an entirely different manner, implying one of bad character, viz. '*ku-śīla*' [4]).

Similar prejudices against actors existed in a country like England as late as the 17th century, where public opinion was fanned and provoked by puritans on the flimsy grounds of morality alone. Decrying the theatre in most effective terms STEVEN GOSSEN [5]) declared: "If any goodness is to be learnt of plays, it is likely that the players themselves, who commit every syllable to memory, should profit most; but their indisciplined behaviour and licentious way of life was anything but slur". Another rank puritan in Northbrook [6]) described the theatre as a satanic institution, bent on demolishing the social structure by banishing out all noble concepts. He considered it a matter of profound regret that the theatre was getting more popular than the church. Corresponding

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1) *Arthaśāstra*, II, 3, 7, p. 44: '*Śūdra-sadharmāṇo vā anyatra cāṇḍālebhyaḥ*'. See also KANE, *History of Dharmaśāstras*, II, pp. 70, 84.

2) NS GOS, 1, 6.

3) *Kāvyamīmāṃsā* GOS, X, pp. 54-55. Cf. RĀJAŚEKHARA's description of the court-protocol shows that even as late as the 10th century A.D. the social status of dancers and actors and other artistes used to be quite low. As a poet and a playwright Rājaśekhara's own tone is not too complimentary and he does not hesitate in relegating these artistes to the lowest position in the royal court. Cf. '*pūrveṇa prākṛtāḥ kavayaḥ, tataḥ paraṃ naṭa-nartaka-gāyana-vādana-vāgjīvina-kuśīlava-tālāvacarāḥ anye 'pi tathāvidhāḥ*".

4) LÉVI, TI, p. 312; KONOW, ID, p. 9.

5) ALLARDYCE NICOLL, *History of English Drama*, IV, Cambridge (1952), p. 302.

6) *Ibid.*

to the fanatic objection of Brāhmaṇas against impersonation of female roles by male actors, the puritans quoted the verdict of PLATO [1]) who regarded this act unmanly. Therefore intensifying their attack against the staging of the plays the puritans finally compelled Parliament to issue a decree against the actors and the players, branding them as rogues not fit to live within the municipal limits. In several cases the play-houses were pulled down and the spectators were penalised [2]). Compared to the above stiff attitude, the reaction of the Brāhmaṇas and priests was considerably mild. However, the result of such strictures against the fine arts may have stunted the growth of Sanskrit dramatic literature. Once the prejudices were laid down, they continued to effect the development of art and the dramatists composed plays with little or no relation to the stage.

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[1]) E. K. CHAMBERS, *Elizabethan Stage*, Vol. I, Oxford (1923), pp. 252, 254. See PLATO, *Rep.* 395 d, 398 e, 387 e; *Laws* 669 c. According to PLATO, dance springs out of the implanted tendency to motion, which makes us accompany any expression in speech or song with gestures and makes the infant move and jump disorderly. The Gods gave us the sense of order and the power of enjoying order to develop these instinctive bodily movements artistically into dance movements. Therefore, dancing and singing in rhythm and harmony at the festivals of the Gods, we not only enjoy ourselves, but honour the Gods rightly (*Laws* 816 a, 672 c, 654 a).

[2]) NICOLL, *Hist. of Eng. Drama*, IV, pp. 103-104.

CHAPTER SIX

THE DANCE AND DRAMA TRADITIONS IN SOUTH INDIA

It is regrettable that owing to a fixed belief in the Aryan supremacy in ancient India, some deep-rooted notions have camouflaged the correct perspective of Indo-Aryan mental and cultural evolution. These notions often taking the shape of institutions had developed even before the arrival of European powers in India [1]. The European nationals on their arrival centred their investigations on some given facts. Impressed by the spiritual and literary attainments of the Aryans, most scholars turned to the studies of the ancient texts. Convinced that the primitive inhabitants of India were an uncultured race without any literary traditions of their own, these writers inadvertently created some unpleasant prejudices against a fairly intelligent population of non-Aryans [2]. Tackling the problem of the origin of Sanskrit drama, they were fascinated by the poetic description of dawn as a dancer as preserved in the Vedic texts. The dialogue hymns and a few ritual ceremonies in the Vedic lore appeared to them as the fore-runners of drama in India. At that time they could not suspect that the much maligned Dravidian population of the South possessed a rich folk-lore of its own. The discovery of a large number of finds excavated in the Indus region opened fresh fields of study but it was not easy to revise traditional thought in so short a time. It was for instance not realised that Indian dancing at a developed stage admits of *Lāsya*, the graceful as an integral part of the dramatic theory [3]. *Lāsya* could be practised by ladies alone and it is doubtful if the priests ever approved of the art in the post-Vedic and epic ages so as to enable the Aryan ladies to pursue it. It is only in recent times that attention has been diverted from the Vedic and epic fields and is directed towards the rich

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[1]) SHILOTRI, IATC, Preface, p. 9.
[2]) NILAKANTA SASTRI, *A History of South India*, Oxford (1955), Ch. I and II; SHILOTRI, IATC, p. 10.
[3]) NS K.M., IV, 285; 292; 294; *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, II. 7.

Dravidian traditions which are woven in the texture of Indian social and cultural life. A sympathetic study of the South Indian traditions, which unfortunately are scantily preserved, points out considerable possibilities of yielding valuable data concerning the origin and decline of the Sanskrit drama, which as it appears may have been borrowed from the non-Aryans or from the South before it developed into its full form.

DANCE AND DRAMA IN TAMIL LITERATURE

It is a pity that we do not possess any authentic records confirming the antiquity of the Tamil language and literature except TOLKĀPPIYAR's famous work on grammar or on the means of literary criticism [1]). At the time TOLKĀPPIYAR wrote his treatise quite a number of dialects were current among the people inhabiting Tamilnad and Kerala country, one of which, the oldest, was Centamil [2]) which had literary hegemony over others. As theie were families, classes and tribes before there was a nation, so there were dialects before there was a common language [3]). Thus Tamil is the oldest surviving idiom in the South. The evidence both direct and indirect proves that the earliest strata of this Dravidian language belongs to a remote pre-Christian period and the civilization depicted in the early works is of fairly great antiquity [4]).

Ancient Tamil literature abounds in references to religious, semi-religious and secular dances and dramatic performances, out of which '*kuttu*' is not only the oldest but also occupies a prominent place [5]). Apart from the local importance of '*kuttu*', as being one of the ancient and popular forms of entertainment, it has a wider Indian importance as it includes within its forms some Sanskrit dramas; these seem to have been added at a relatively late stage. The term '*kuttu*' means both dance and the art of dance. It could not be performed at common places like other modes of entertainment but had a special place in the Devālayas or temples. The

[1]) K. R. SRINIVAS IYENGAR, *Dravidian Languages and Literature*, in *The Age of Imperial Unity*, Bombay (1953), pp. 292-93.
[2]) KAMEL ZUELEBIL, *Dialects of Tamil*, Archiv Orientální 27 (1959), pp. 272-74.
[3]) *Ibid.*, p. 272.
[4]) NILAKANTA SASTRI, HSI, p. 2; S. VAIYAPURI PILLAI, *History of Tamil Language and Literature*, Madras (1956), p. 7.
[5]) VARADRAJAN, BNS, p. 421.

professional actors were called *'kuttar'* and *'purnar'* while their female counterparts were known as *'viraliyar'*, the exponents of aesthetic emotions [1]). This terminology was in vogue in early Tamil literature as most of the relative terms have been used by TOLKĀPPIYAR. In his introduction to Tolkāppiyam, BISHOP CALDWELL admits, that apart from the issue of the remote antiquity of the work, it certainly is the crystalised result of centuries of literary traditions in the South of India [2]). Approximately the work belongs to a period when the movement of Aryanization proceeded steadily and peacefully in the South.

As confirmed by several sources, the civilization depicted in the early Tamil literature is that of Dravidians, who were the most important and advanced of the non-Aryan races that contributed to the growth of Indian culture. These literary works belong to the Sangam age, the classical period of Tamil literature [3]), the chronology of which is still in an unsettled state. Roughly speaking the Sangam epoch may be assigned to a period commencing with the 5th century before Christ and ending with the 4th century of our era [4]). Tradition records that these Sangams, the literary cycles, were held at three different periods and in three different places, viz. South Madura, Kapadpuram and modern Madura [5]).

Tradition makes AGASTYA, who is supposed to be the first Aryan to have penetrated into the South, the father of Tamil. He is reported to have studied with PĀṆINI and then to have written a grammatical treatise called *'Agastyam'* or *'Agatthiam'*. According to tradition he was also a royal chaplain of the divine line of the Pandya kings, descendents of Śiva and Pārvatī [6]). Whatever be the value of these legends they must have gained currency at the time the Aryans were moving into the South. The famous Tamil grammarian TOLKĀPPIYAR was according to tradition one of the twelve

[1]) PISHROTI, *South Indian Theatre*, TOH, p. 193.

[2]) See also J. FILLIOZAT, in L. RENOU et J. FILLIOZAT, *L'Inde classique*, II, Paris (1953), p. 97.

[3]) K. R. S. IYENGAR, in *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 291.

[4]) NILAKANTA SASTRI, *The Colas*, VII, pp. 110-140; JULES BLOCH, *Introduction to Shilappadikāram*, Madras (1956), p. 8; K. R. S. IYENGAR, in *The Age of Imperial Unity*, pp. 291-293; according to P. MEILE, in RENOU-FILLIOZAT, II, p. 306, the Sangam age seems to have reached its close in the 3rd century A.D.

[5]) VARADRAJAN, BNS, pp. 419-20.

[6]) NILAKANTA SASTRI, *History of South India* pp. 66-75.

disciples of AGASTYA [1]. Being perhaps one of the earlier surviving works in Tamil Tolkāppiyam gives useful information relating to the social organization of Tamils, their main occupations, social customs and habits. It also tells us that at that time the social structure was a mixed one for there are portions in the text in which Aryans also are said to be residing in the South [2]. In addition to the above information the author discusses at length the principles of dramaturgy and some of the dramatic traditions which have survived only in parts. While allusions made by PĀṆINI and PATAÑJALI are confined to a few references concerning dancing and acting, both 'Agatthiam' and 'Tolkāppiyam' contain detailed information on these popular arts and discuss the topics in extenso.

According to the traditional classification Tamil literature is divided into a threefold division called *'mutta-Tamil'*, mainly dealing with *'iyal'* prose and poetry, *'iśai'*, the musical poetry and *'nāḍakam'*, the dramatic literature [3]. Impressed by these well-defined traditions CHATTERJI admitted that South India has its characteristic dramatic traditions which are not found elsewhere [4]. Although it would be too presumptuous to regard them as purely non-Aryan, as literary traditions have often been inter-linked with local forms of culture, the treatment suggests that the subjects were thoroughly and systematically studied.

As observed earlier the Sangam literature deals with *'kuttu'* in detail which it regards as one of the ancient and popular forms of entertainments. Its sub-divisions were also worked out systematically. Since *'kuttu'* cannot be staged outside the temple precincts and only a particular section of Ambalvasis are allowed to demonstrate

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1) ABDUL LATIF, *Cultural History of India*, p. 10; see also K. R. S. IYENGAR, *The Age of Imperial Unity*, pp. 293-94.

2) A. CHAKRAVARTY, *Tirukkural*, Madras (1953), Introduction, pp. XXIV-XXVI. While no agreement has been reached on the precise date of TOLKĀPPIYAR, some scholars are inclined to ascribe him to the 4th or 5th century B.C. For details see K. K. PILLAI, Madras University Journal, XXVIII-2 (1957), p. 166; MEILE, in RENOU-FILLIOZAT, II, o.c., p. 297; V. R. R. DIKSHITAR, *Studies in Tamil Literature and History*, London (1930), p. 278; K. R. S. IYENGAR, *The Age of Imperial Unity*, pp. 293-94; F. B. J. KUIPER, *Two Problems of Old Tamil Phonology*, Indo-Iranian Journal, II, The Hague (1958), p. 218; Professor KUIPER brings down the date to the 5th century A.D.

3) VARADRAJAN, BNS, pp. 419-20.

4) S. K. CHATTERJI, *Indian Drama*, Introduction, Govt. of India publications, Delhi (1956), pp. 11-12.

it, the details of make-up, modes of representation and restrictions imposed on the actors were characteristically defined in the treatises [1]. An old commentator on 'Shilappadikāram', gives the following sub-divisions of 'kuttu', which clearly indicate the existence of a well-established tradition [2]:

1. *Vasai kuttu* deals with satire
2. *Pugall kuttu* deals with eulogy
3. *Vettiyal kuttu* deals with royal themes
4. *Poduviyal kuttu* deals with folk-lore
5. *Verik kuttu* deals with musical themes
6. *Vari-candik kuttu* deals with eulogy of gods
7. *Iyalbuk kuttu* deals with natural descriptions
8. *Deśik kuttu* deals with local traditions
9. *Vinoda kuttu* deals with general recreation
10. *Arya kuttu* deals with Aryan lore.

By the time the above classification was effected, some Aryan traditions must have become mixed up with local tradictions, as is evident from some of the terms in the list. The terms are in conformity with references by TOLKĀPPIYAR who admits of Aryans residing in Tamilnad country.

The bards an dancers in Tamilnad had formed a class of their own. Their troupes were mostly attached to royal houses or to influential persons. The stories of their miseries are preserved in a few special texts called *'āṟṟupaḍai'* [3]. It may be assumed that some of the early dramatic traditions may have originated among this class of bards, minstrels and wandering artistes. Their main function corresponded with that of the *Cāraṇas*, who were censured by MANU. They may be regarded as representatives of some early tribal groups among whom the primitive forms of folk-dances and songs [4] survived. The Bharatas themselves may have been a pre-Aryan race who may have adopted this name after coming in contact with the Aryans. It is not possible to examine the details of the theory postulated by HEWITT, who identified Bharatas as Dravidians [5]. That the *Cāraṇas* and actors were all classed as

1) PISHROTI, *South Indian Theatre*, TOH, pp. 193-94.
2) *Ibid.*, ADIKYARKKUNALWAR in *Shilappadikāram*, III. 12.
3) VARADRAJAN, BNS, p. 422; TOLKĀPPIYAM, *Porul* 56.
4) NILAKANTA SASTRI, *The Colas*, p. 76.
5) HEWITT, *Primitive Traditional History* II, pp. 898-99.

Bharatas in the later literature finds support from Nāṭyaśāstra and other literary works. This assumption partially explains many incongruities with which BHARATA's identity is linked. It may not be possible at this stage to adduce positive proofs in support of this view but it concurs well with the traditional account of BHARATA as preserved in the Nāṭyaśāstra.

Thus it can be assumed that the matriarchal system of Dravidian society encouraged the pursuits of dance, drama and music, where men and women freely contributed to its growth. Throughout the past centuries the people of the South have shown their devotion to these arts, never allowing the sources of traditional lore to dry up. They could retain much because they were not hampered by the abuses of the class system and class distinctions [1]).

TWO EARLY TAMIL POEMS

The antiquity of dance-drama traditions as practised in the South along the entire Malabar coast is further supported by numerous references made in two romantic poems composed, perhaps, in the early centuries of the Christian era. The first '*Shilappadikāram*', a romantic Tamil poem, is believed to have been composed towards the end of the second or beginning of the third century, by the Kerala prince ILANGŌ ADIGAL, the younger brother of the king who meets a tragic end in the poem [2]). The story opens with the love of Kōvalan and Mādavi, the cow-herd boy and an accomplished courtesan of Puhar. Though married Kōvalan is infatuated by the uncommon charm of the dancing girl, whom the king of the city honours on Indra's banner day. The love is reciprocal and after a brief period of excitement and joy the two drift apart. Kōvalan returns home to his legal wife, Kannaki by name. Without a word of reproach, she takes her husband away to the flourishing city of Madura to earn a fresh living there. While she stays out, Kōvalan enters the town to sell a gold-bangle to a goldsmith. Unfortunately the bangle resembles the anklet of the queen, which was stolen by the same goldsmith. The latter seizes the opportunity and presents poor Kōvalan to the king as a thief and the former without holding any enquiry has the innocent man beheaded. When this tragic news

[1]) ABDUL LATIF, *Cultural History of India*, p. 12.
[2]) For date and other details see DIKSHITAR's *Shilappadikāram*, Introduction.

reaches Kannaki, she is shocked and immediately approaches the king with the second anklet. The king and his courtiers are all overawed when she produces the second anklet. Realising his error the king collapses there and then but Kannaki is not satisfied. She insists on wreaking a terrible vengeance. She plucks off her left breast and hurls it on the town, which is engulfed in fire and immediately reduced to ashes.

Apart from the supernatural descriptions the poem records a picture of a highly developed civilization abounding in references to theatre, music, dance, poetry, architecture, painting and fantasies of magic and superstitions [1]. Shilappadikāram introduces the reader to a different world, a world of arts and artists. There is enough evidence to prove that at the time this poem was composed, ritual dancing and singing were in vogue [2]. The king and the common man regarded both as sublime pursuits. The poem records an incident when on the arrival of the Chera king, a Chakkiar from Travancore entertained the king with a 'kuttu' performance [3]. These events relate to a state in which the native arts received encouragement from the king and even the hetaeras were honoured for their accomplishments and achievements.

In addition to its antiquity the poem records the two-fold division of *Nṛtta* and *Nṛtya* as classified in BHARATA's Nāṭyaśāstra. Mādavi was accomplished in both the aspects. The number of musical instruments in Mādavi's house compares favourably with descriptions in Nāṭyaśāstra. Not only is there mention of a legendary origin of dancing, the dance-drama festival was also held on Indra's banner day in conformity with BHARATA's recommendations [4]. Thus most of the traditions narrated in Nāṭyaśāstra are preserved in this epic poem.

The second epic, *Manimekhalai*, is of later date. It records the same theme with the addition that Manimekhala, the daughter of Kōvalan and Mādavi, learns the sad story from her mother. Depressed and disturbed she embraces Buddhism and thus mitigates the period of her misery. The outstanding features of this poem are the dance descriptions as narrated by Kōvalan, which corres-

1) DE ZOETE, TOM, Ch. iii, p. 36; NILAKANTA SASTRI, *The Colas*, pp. 77-78.
2) DIKSHITAR, *Shilappadikāram*, pp. 57-58.
3) MOHAN KHAKOR, Kathakali Issue Marg, Bombay (1957), p. 7.
4) DIKSHITAR, *Shilappadikāram*, p. 58; DE ZOETE, TOM, pp. 145-47.

Śiva the Naṭarāja in a 'Gaja-tāṇḍava' performance, resting his foot on an elephant-head instead of the customary demon

Bronze: Trivandrum Museum

Roshan Vajifdar in a Bharatanāṭyam pose

Mrs. Indrāṇi Rehman in a Bharatanāṭyam pose

PLATE VIII

Mrs. ndraṇi Rehman demonstrating a Bharatanāṭyam pose

pond with the Bharatanāṭya style as it is practised to-day. According to BLOCH [1]), both the poems are accredited Sangam works comparing favourably with Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata and are invaluable sources for the reconstruction of the traditional history of Tamilnad. In chapter sixth of Manimekhalai, the author SĪTTLAI SĀTTANĀR presents eleven scenes from Aryan mythology alone. Like Kāmasūtra the poem offers valuable information about the institution of hetaeras, who received their training for a number of years in the art of dancing, singing, lute- and flute-playing [2]).

ŚIVA THE NAṬARĀJA: LORD OF DANCE

In the light of modern researches the synthetic character of Indian culture is being gradually revealed. Several features of arts and customs in Hindu culture are ascribed to some pre-Aryan sources [3]). One of the figures of the Hindu pantheon is the fascinating god Śiva in his various forms. The bewildered devotees invoke him by several names, which not only denote his multiple properties but also suggest the manifold activities of this peculiar god.

The basic and most popular object of worship among the Śiva shrines is the phallus or *liṅgam* which denotes the male creative energy and is frequently seen beside the primary symbol of female creative energy, the *yoni*. These objects represent the creative union that sustains the life of the universe. This aspect is also reflected in the co-operative pairs of opposites which have survived in the form of dual-sexes. Father Heaven and mother Earth, Dyaus and Pṛthivī, Zeus and Hera, Yang and Ying in China are some of the oldest expressions of the same creative force like that of Śiva and Śakti [4]). However, the most fascinating aspect of his phenomenal existence is that of *Naṭarāja*. Śiva the lord of lords, the lord of beasts, the lord of Śakti, is also lord of dance and dancers [5]).

As observed earlier, dancing appears to have come to humanity

1) BLOCH, *Shilappadikāram*, pp. 8-9; see also K. R. S. IYANGER in *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 301, where the two poems are compared to the 'Iliad' and 'Odyssey'.

2) NILAKANTA SASTRI, *The Colas*, p. 78.

3) S. K. CHATTERJI, *Foundations of Civilization in India*, DEEL (1929), pp. 79-80.

4) ZIMMER, MSIA, pp. 137-38.

5) *Ibid.*, pp. 151-56.

very early and in countless forms. Dance is the everlasting drama subdivided into the acts of love, war, religion and arts [1]. Whether it appeared in secular or religious form in India, it is traditionally associated with the main activity of god Śiva, who besides the famous *tāṇḍava* is, according to tradition, also the author of some other forms of dance. His dances have been interpreted in different ways. Devotees see all the three aspects of the creation of *satva, rajas* and *tamas* in his dances. COOMARASWAMY [2] suggests that *tāṇḍava* or dreadful belongs to his *tāmasic* dreadful aspects, bearing the treats of a pre-Aryan deity with half-god and half-demon form. In this state a dwarfish demon called *Apasmāra* is shown lying trampled under the god's feet, signifying the attainment of perfect wisdom.

As the Cosmic dancer, Śiva is the embodiment and manifestation of eternal energy in its five activities, which have been elaborately discussed in Śaiva literature. *Tirumatantram,* a Tamil work on Śaiva philosophy, explains the five activities as representing *sṛṣṭi* the evolution, *sthiti* the preservation, *saṃhāra* the destruction, *tirobhāva* the illusion, and *anugraha* the salvation. The god displays all these aspects in sequence consecutively, which are symbolised in the various positions of hands and feet [3]. The upper three hands symbolize creation, maintenance and destruction respectively. The foot planted on the demon '*Apasmāra*', "the forgetfulness" or "confusion of mind", is concealment, while the raised foot signifies fervour [4]. All these five activities are maintained in quick succession and in a sequence. As a *nṛtyamūrti* Śiva is believed to be embodying in himself, and simultaneously releasing, the eternal energy [5].

Śiva as Naṭarāja is represented in several beautiful series of South Indian bronzes, dating from ancient times, the chief of which is preserved in the Madras museum which was discovered in the Nedungudu area adjoining the Śivaitic Karikal shrines. There is a traditional belief that lord Śiva was born in the town of Padmanābhapuram near Cape Comorin, where a superb mural is preserved

1) VAN DER LEEUW, *In den hemel is eenen dans*, p. 16.
2) A. COOMARASWAMY, *Dance of Śiva*, New York (1918), p. 70.
3) *Ibid.*, pp. 70-72.
4) ZIMMER, MSIA, p. 155.
5) *Ibid.*, p. 152.

in the state gallery. The elaborately defined 108 poses of dance as described by BHARATA in his Nāṭyaśātra, are preserved in the great temple hall of Chidambaram. Spiritually interpreted Śiva's dance hall is the human heart but the material dance ground is traditionally located in the centre of the universe and that centre is again located in the famous temple of Chidambaram, where *tāṇḍava* is believed to have been performed by the king of dancers.

Some of the oldest pre-historic traditions are supposed to have been preserved in the Śaivāgamas. It is likely that the Śaivāgamas as preserved to-day are, comparatively speaking, of a later period; but the traditions regarding the arts of dancing, music, sculpture and architecture, especially those of temple construction and idol construction, must be fairly old. In one of the systems of *lakulīśa pāśupata* of the second century of the Christian era, the religious practices enjoined include dancing and singing by a devotee and also expect him to act as a lover in a public place [1]. The Pāśupata ascetics are advised to rave or behave like mad persons, dancing and laughing wildly. VĀTSYĀYANA [2] admits to have incorporated not only some old traditions but mentions Nandī, the attendant of Śiva, as having composed the first Kāmatantra of a hundred chapters. Whatever may have been the chronological value of this evidence, it can be assumed that Śiva, the pre-Aryan god, had inspired the pre-Aryan population with most of the art traditions, including those of dance, music and singing, which all go to make a complete drama.

Another tradition makes Śiva the author of fourteen basic aphorisms or '*sūtras*' on which stands the super-structure of Pāṇinian grammar. After a dance session in utter ecstacy Śiva produced 14 beats of his Dhakkā (drum) producing the 14 aphorisms in order to help some sages who were deeply engrossed in formulating the system [3].

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1) K. C. PANDEY, *Comparative History of Western Aesthetics*, II, Banaras (1954), pp. 521-22; R. G. BHANDARKAR, *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism*, Strassburg (1913), p. 122; J. N. FARQUHAR, *An Outline of the Religious Literature of India*, Oxford (1920), p. 146 f.

2) *Kāmasūtra*, Lahore edition, 1-8, p. 2; the Sanskrit text in KSS says: *Mahādevānucaraś ca Nandī sahasreṇādhyāyānāṃ pṛthak kāmasūtraṃ provāca.*

3) The 14 '*pratyāhāra*' sūtras are known as '*Māheśvara-sūtrāṇi*'. The tradition is supported by the following anthological verse:

'*nṛtyāvasāne naṭarāja-rājo nanāda ḍhakkāṃ navapañca-vāraṃ*
uddhartukāmaḥ Sanakādi-siddhān etad vimarśe Śiva-sūtra-jālaṃ'.

Whatever may be the significance of these legends, Śiva is a peculiar god, peculiar because he embodies within him the Aryan and Dravidian concepts in a mysterious but soothing manner. Through dancing he exercises his manifold functions of creation, preservation and destruction. On one hand he is associated with acts of savagery and sacrificial rites prevalent among the tribal people of South India and on the other he and his spouse Śakti have inspired the 'tantra' cult with strange beliefs and practises. He is the mystic dancer uniting the visible and invisible aspects of his creation. The dancing of Śiva is particularly symbolical of his perpetual gracious actions throughout the universe and in loving hearts. He reminds one of the pre-Aryan demon dancers in the burning grounds [1]. How and when he acquired all these varied aspects is not known. It is equally difficult to trace the beginning of the plastic shapes in the form of Naṭarāja. But the concept of Śiva as promoter of the dance on the Indian stage may have been very old and BHARATA must only have incorporated an ancient tradition in his Nāṭyaśāstra. It is a bewildering conception of the god when the artist forgets all about Śiva's destroying and dreadful role. It is likely that this role may have been related to the earliest magico-religious rites for dance is regarded as an early form of magic. Dance induces trance, ecstacy, the experience of the divine, the realization of one's own nature and finally helps in achieving mergence into the divine essence [2]. Lord Rudra manifests himself in a thousand shapes, says the Vedic devotee [3] but the dancer knows his lord as Naṭarāja, the lord of dancers.

BHARATANĀṬYAM AND DEVADĀSĪS

One of the most famous and oldest solo dances to be performed exclusively by women, is *Bharatanāṭyam*. As the term signifies it must, before it was adapted for the secular stage, have been a religious dance set in the tradition of the Sage BHARATA. The secularisation of this dance may have added to the erotic element, overshadowing its religious character; but it is likely that its original character may have been predominantly religious as it

[1]) S. DAS GUPTA, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, V, Cambridge (1955), p. 151.

[2]) ZIMMER, MSIA, p. 151.

[3]) VS, XVI, 54, *asaṃkhyātā sahasrāṇi ye Rudrā adhi bhūmyāṃ*.

still hovers around the religious themes [1]). It is a semi-dramatic type of dance as various characters participate in the songs when the solo performer interprets them through the gesture language of *mudrā*. One single dancer has to play several roles without changing his dress and form and then interprets different situations through a remarkable technique of gestures and postures. The basis of *Bharatanāṭyam* is music to which dance seems to have been added or it may be even otherwise. Though the broad form is more or less fixed variations within the form are ingeniously added by performers from time to time. It is at once a riot of music, dance and gestures [2]). The tradition is alive in South-India even to-day. Noted for its orthodoxy and conservatism, the South is the repository of several such arts which are obscure in other parts of India. However, in essence, atmosphere, theory and appreciation, this dance is purely and demonstratively ancient [3]).

Possibly the name of *Bharatanāṭyam* was chosen for this dance because it embodies the principles of dramatic art preserved in BHARATA's Nāṭyaśāstra. However, till very recently it was purely a temple dance performed by Devadāsīs, the female slaves of the gods [4]). It is not necessary to trace its beginning and claim a high antiquity for it but it is believed that this institution of Devadāsīs is fairly old and must have undergone considerable changes during the course of centuries. Despite strong resentment, this traditional and hereditary craft survived the stress and strain of centuries. It is only recently that the institution has been discontinued as a measure of social reform.

Towards the beginning of the epic age when laws of morality and religious vows were made more rigid and a code of guiding laws was formulated, the general position of the Aryan women deteriorated. It may without exaggeration be assumed not only that they were debarred from learning, dancing and music but also that the freedom they enjoyed in the Vedic age was withdrawn from them. Because of priestly censure the fine arts could not be practised freely by the highborn; these were patronised by the lowborn, who developed them into a profession. But as the priests

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1) DE ZOETE, TOM, p. 170.
2) *Ibid.*
3) BOWERS, *The Dance in India*, pp. 13-15.
4) DE ZOETE, TOM, p. 160.

and Brāhmaṇas both aspired to the company of women to satisfy the basic urge of lust, therefore, in the name of the gods the priests approved of this institution of Devadāsīs, which made a demand on virgins to dedicate themselves, body and soul, to the temple deity and incidentally to one who officiated in the temple [1]. These unfortunate girls were trained in the art of music and dancing by persons of low estate and humble life, who started thriving on the earnings of Devadāsī girls. Some of these girls, being accomplished in the art of dancing, commanded the influence of the higher circles through their graceful allurements. They conjoined sanctity with allurements, religion with lust, art with sensuousness and were skilful exponents of the trade. Beyond all doubt the trade flourished among the lower circles, which had in the course of time assumed hereditary status.

That the institution of Devadāsīs is fairly old, is evidenced by the contents of an inscription found in the famous Jogīmāra caves of Rāmgarh [2], which is claimed to be a theatre hall. The inscription reads as follows:

Sutanukā nāma / devadāsikyi
tām kāmayitha Bālanaśeye
Devadinne nāma / lūpadakhe.

Though the text has different variations as read by BLOCH, BOYER, PISCHEL and CHATTERJI, it makes clear mention of a Devadāsī by the name of Sutanukā who was loved by an artiste of Banaras, Devadatta by name. It has been suggested that the dance-drama hall of Jogīmāra cave must have provided space for performances in the third or fourth centuries before the beginning of the Christian era. It has also been suggested that the figurine of the dancing girl found at Harappa represents a temple dancer or prostitute, a class of women which became a regular feature of later Hindu civilization [3]. The practice of maintaining dancing girls in the temples must have been prevalent in KĀLIDĀSA's age as he refers to their presence in the temple of Mahākāla at Ujjayinī [4]. The Padma-

[1]) *Ibid.*, pp. 160-61. See also notes 1 and 2, p. 105.
[2]) LÜDERS, *Bruchstücke Buddhistischer Dramen*, p. 41; BLOCH, Arch. Survey of India Report 1903-04, p. 128 dd.; BOYER, Journal As. Ser. X, 3, p. 484 ff.; PISCHEL, Sitzungsber. d. Preuss. Ak. d. W. 1906, S. 498 ff.
[3]) A. L. BASHAM, *The Wonder that was India*, London (1954), p. 21.
[4]) *Meghadūta*, I, 38.

purāṇa [1]) recommends the purchase of such girls for dedication to the temples and the Bhaviṣyapurāṇa [2]) throws out the bait of winning a proper place in heaven if a bevy of prostitutes is dedicated to the Sun god. Perhaps this explains why YUAN CHWANG in the 7th century of our era saw numerous singing girls in the temple of the Sun at Multan [3]). Later, Rājataraṅgiṇī [4]) attests the prevalence of the custom and numerous references from South Indian inscriptions support the existence of this unfortunate practice [5]). That the prostitutes performed dance-recitals in the famous temple of Viśvanātha at Banaras, may appear a reference in Kuṭṭanīmatam [6]).

Several accounts relating to the social-religious position of Devadāsīs are available to-day. It transpires that their social status more or less depended on the nature of their dedication and the influence of the temple gods to which they belonged. It can be assumed that those countless alluring and artistic poses found engraved in the temples and also preserved in some of the art galleries of India, may have been brought to perfection by such artistes who had access to Devadāsīs and the like. Still, there must have been a few Devadāsīs, who discarding all allurements and sensuous pleasures, may have sought salvation in a spirit of devotion to art and to the deity. Their traditional training of centuries made them accomplished dancers. As enjoined in the Viṣṇudharmottara [7]), music, the dance and even painting, all three make a perfect trio. As believed generally dance may have preceded music; but it could never thrive without the aid of music in India, where it has been made an embodiment of that art.

Like several other institutions the institution of Devadāsīs was debased by priests who considered the girls to be their own property

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1) *Padmapurāṇa, Sṛṣṭikāṇḍa*, 52-97.

2) *Bhaviṣyapurāṇa*, 1.93.67:
veśyākadambakaṃ yas tu dadyāt sūryāya bhaktitaḥ
sa gacchet paramaṃ sthānaṃ yatra tiṣṭhati bhānumān'.

3) A. S. ALTEKAR, *The Position of Women in Hindu Civilization*, Banaras (1956), p. 183.

4) *Rājataraṅgiṇī*, IV, 31.

5) ALTEKAR, *The Position of Women in Hindu Civilization*, p. 183.

6) *Kuṭṭanīmatam*, stanzas 743-755.

7) *Viṣṇudharmottara*, Bombay (1912), Vol III, ii, 4. The author narrates the story of Vajra and Mārkaṇḍeya emphasizing the importance of music, dance and painting.

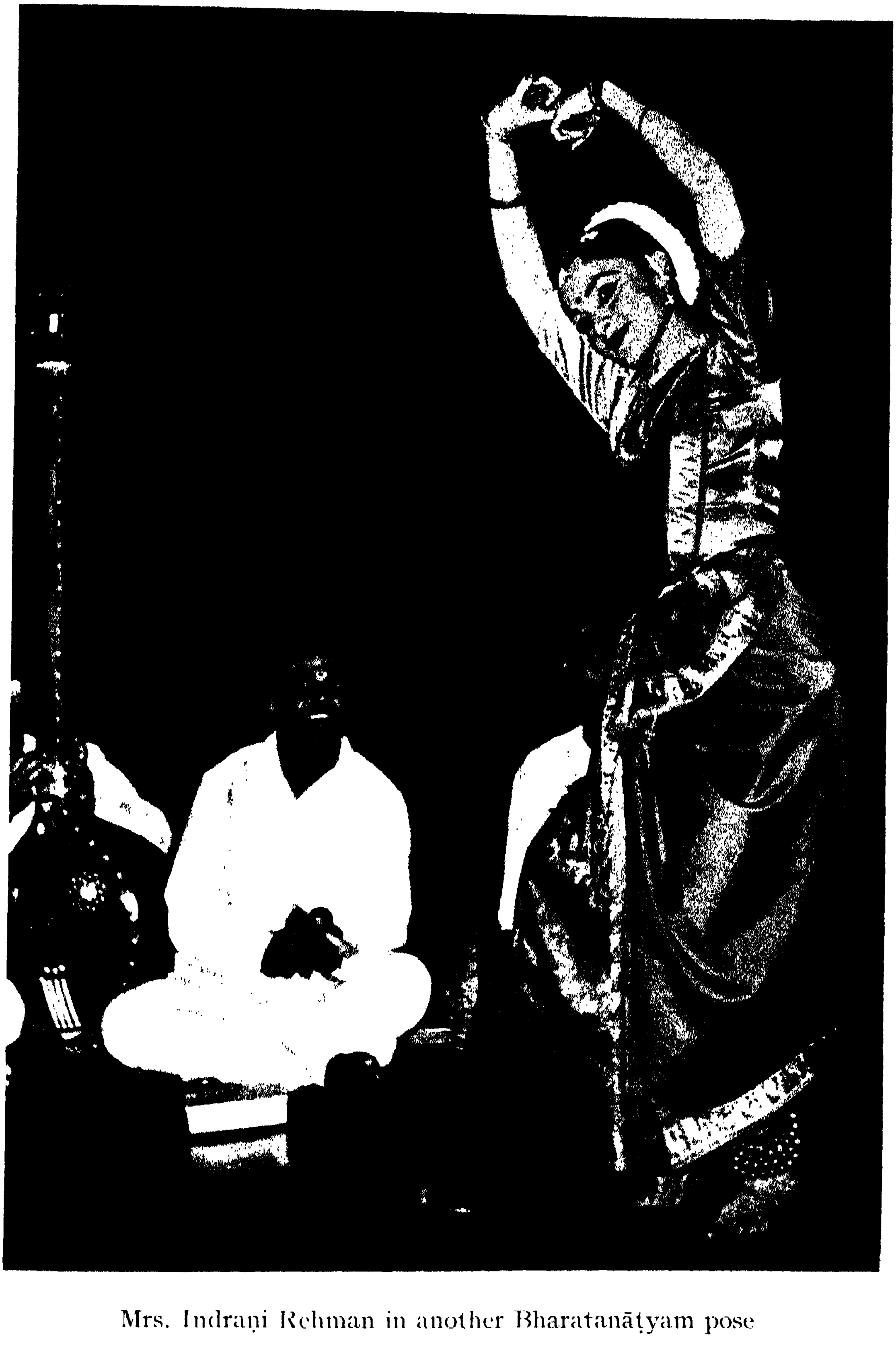
and paid them so little for their living that they had to raise extra income by objectionable methods and led a precarious life. But here is a seduction which retained its grace and dignity. It was in these circles that the tradition of *Bharatanāṭyam*, embracing dance-drama and music, developed and flourished since ancient times. This picture of the Devadāsīs corresponds to the description of courtesans in the Kāmasūtra who were recommended as storehouses of music, dance, art, humour, wit and other accomplishments. Vasantasenā of Śūdraka could also be regarded as a representative of a class, which, though denied a status in society contributed magnificently to the development of fine arts.

India's temple wealth is a living testimony to the accomplishments of these humble devotees. Thousands of temples in South India have preserved the records of these ancient traditions of dance and drama. Some scholars believe that the Indus Valley chapter is only a late episode in the cultural history of India, which may have been preceded by other cultures whose layers are being gradually revealed [1]). It may not be possible to assign such remote antiquity to these objects of art and architecture but the dance halls and numerous pillars with dancing figures in all poses, in which the South is exceptionally rich, are living memorials of an inherited, imbred and perfect vision of beauty. It has been mentioned that the pretty queen SHANTALA of Hoysala dynasty was herself a great dancer, whose poses are carved in Belur and Halelid in Mysore. No queen of Aryan descent would have been permitted to demonstrate her art to the people. These perfect figures with curves and lines would not be possible without the proud traditions of centuries of dedicated craftmanship, because awareness of ideal beauty is not acquired but is born in us.

CULTURAL TRADITIONS IN SOUTH-EAST ASIA

China and India were two sources from which higher cultural influences travelled into the South-eastern countries of Asia in prehistoric and historical periods [2]). However, India was the main source of most theatrical and dance traditions preserved in several countries of these regions. Though 'opera' in China and the theatre

[1]) STUART PIGGOT, *Prehistoric India*, Harmondsworth (1950).
[2]) NILAKANTA SASTRI, *South Indian Influences in the Far East*, Bombay (1949), p. 7.



Mrs. Indrani Rehman in another Bharatanāṭyam pose

in Japan have grown some traditions independently, their basic principles bear a close similarity in institution, aim and execution to Indian traditions. To understand the theatre in Asia, one has to study the subtle but strong traditions of India, which travelled to neighbouring and far-eastern countries at a remote period [1]. The similarities are so striking that it could be assumed that the cultural influences from India must have started operating earlier than it is usually believed and the process must have continued through several centuries.

Most of the countries of the South-eastern region have their Sanskrit names. Burma was known as *Suvarṇa-bhūmi* [2]. Java was known as *Yavadvīpa* [3]. Malaya and the Malayan Archipelago were famous by the name of *Suvarṇa-dvīpa*. Despite sustained researches in the fields of archaeology, epigraphy and anthropology, it is not definitely known when and how these contacts started and what were the motives of the early adventurers. This issue has been discussed by several competent authorities suggesting a number of possibilities. It has been suggested that after the Aryanization of Southern India, the apostles of Aryan culture turned their attention to these neighbouring countries, called *dvīpāntara*. While the possibilities of an Aryan migration cannot be altogether ruled out, the nature and character of the cultural traits retained in these countries point to the more plausible suggestion that some groups of early Dravidian [4] merchants found their way into these regions of greater India. The evidence of the Periplus, PTOLEMY and Chinese texts bear convincing indications that several river and sea ports round the Southern coast countries of India were quite active in the period preceding the advent of the Christian era [5].

It is a wellknown fact that the Buddhist religion which sprang up in the North-eastern regions of India, penetrated as far as China, Japan and Indonesia. Several Buddhists who migrated to these neighbouring countries may have carried the seeds of Indian customs, manners, music, dance and drama. Another

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1) BOWERS, TE, pp. 3-4.

2) J. GONDA, *Sanskrit in Indonesia*, Nagpur (1952), p. 11; see also BAHADUR CHANDRA CHABRA, *Ancient Asia and S. E. Asia*, in IAC January 1956, p. 301.

3) GONDA, *Sanskrit in Indonesia*, p. 24.

4) *Ibid.*, p. 89; CHABRA, IAC, p. 301.

5) GONDA, *Sanskrit in Indonesia*, p. 24.

possibility usually suggested is that the Indian traders risked these sea voyages in quest of gold, or profit, or it may have been the usual desire for commerce which encouraged their migration. These traders may have been followed by priests, scholars, artistes and other professionals. The priestly Brāhmaṇas of Kauṇḍinya lineage and the followers of Agastya may have been brought there by these seafaring adventurers. The local population, being impressed by some of the cultural traits of the visitors, must have readily accepted and absorbed them. In the process of the fusion of two cultures, Indian civilization had much to offer to the natives. Convinced of this Indian impact BOWERS [1]) remarked "The combination of Buddhists and South Indian expansionists resulted in the civilizing presence of India being keenly felt throughout Asia".

There is considerable epigraphic evidence to maintain that the Śiva, Viṣṇu, Agastya and Bhagavatī cults had reached Greater India at an early date. The role of Agastya as the promotor of Indian religion and preacher of Śaivism is well supported by epigraphical, literary and scriptural evidence: in Indonesia this may be interpreted as a continuation of the Agastya traditions of South India [2]). The introduction of the *Ādi Śaka* [3]) era as mentioned in the Javanese inscriptions further on indicates the possibilities of a cultural flow from the South of India. The phallus worship of Śiva was also quite popular in most parts and a Śiva temple was constructed at Campa in memory of king Bhadravarman [4]). Images of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva are found in every temple in Siam [5]). The Indian impact on art and culture is so remarkable that while visiting Java, the poet TAGORE [6]) had to admit that the finest Indian-inspired dances are exquisitely maintained and performed not in India but in Bali. Perhaps the best exposition of *Bharatanāṭyam* dance can still be found in Java [7]).

As in India so in greater India Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata exercised great influence on cultural traditions. The dance-drama

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1) BOWERS, TE, p. 6.
2) NIKALANTA SASTRI, SIIFE, pp. 128-129; see also GONDA, *Sanskrit in Indonesia*, pp. 24-25.
3) NILAKANTA SASTRI, SIIFE, p. 127.
4) *Ibid.*, pp. 54-55.
5) *Ibid.*, pp. 72-73.
6) BOWERS, TE, p. 7.
7) CHABRA, IAC 1956, p. 306. For more information on dance-drama traditions see B. DE ZOETE and W. SPIES, *Dance and Drama in Bali*, London (1938).

traditions preserved in South East Asia show the tremendous influence of the two epic poems. The stories and main episodes are maintained with slight variations and are recited everywhere, most of the episodes are also transformed into dances. In Indonesia MBH is known as *Bratayuda*, meaning the battle of the Bratas (Bhāratas). In Thailand Rāma has been merged into Buddha but the story is still faithful to Rāmāyaṇa. It is all the more remarkable that despite changes in religious atmosphere the epic episodes still continue to flourish uninterrupted. In Jogjakarta, the episode of the elopement of Subhadrā with Arjuna is transformed into a beautiful dance, which even a Muslim Sultan enjoys as well as his courtiers. In Laos, Cambodia, Thailand and some parts of Malaya, the common term for dance is *Ram, Rom* or *Lom* which indicates the tremendous influence of Rāmāyaṇa over these theatrical traditions [1]).

How these theatrical traditions drew inspiration from India cannot be told with any precision as they must have reached the present state of development after many centuries. What is more important and significant is: that as in India so in greater India the dance and drama traditions are mainly associated with the South Indian Dravidian peoples. Theirs was the early enterprise which carried the vast cultural wealth to these distant lands which in course of time developed there as a national heritage. Even some of the dramatic traditions extinct in India can be found flourishing in greater India. No doubt South Indians and Buddhists were our first ambassadors to these distant lands, but a great deal of credit goes to the Sanskrit language which bridged the distances, creating common bonds [2]). Some epic texts and Purāṇas formed the foundations in Java and Bali and several inscriptions are preserved as good specimens of Sanskrit influence. Curiously enough, Buddhism and Śaivism which were intolerant of each other in the mother country, both joined hands outside India and combined shrines of Śiva and Buddha were erected in Greater India, which are called Śiva-Buddhālayas [3]). In short the culture of greater India absorbed some of the best and most sublime traits of Indian culture as they were brought in successive waves by early South Indian merchant-adventurers and the Buddhists.

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1) BOWERS, TE, pp. 14-15.

2) CHABRA, IAC, p. 305.

3) *Ibid.*, pp. 306-07; see also NILAKANTA SASTRI, SIIFE, p. 131; Dr. SASTRI calls these combined Śiva-Buddha shrines '*Śiva-buddha-loka*'.

L. B. S. National A...

CHAPTER SEVEN

SOME IMPORTANT PROBLEMS RELATING TO INDIAN DRAMA

1. Buddhist and Jain Traditions

As discussed in the foregoing chapters, Sanskrit drama from its infancy was beset with several unfavourable factors. Before attaining any definite form, it had to put up a hard struggle for its survival. In addition to the sectarian and religious prejudices existing in the Brāhmaṇical circles, the dance and drama both came under the strict vigilance of Buddhists and Jains, who regarded these as sensuous arts. Since both the reactionary sects denounced such pursuits, princes and patrons, under the influence of either of these religious orders, attempted to ban dance, drama and music. Buddhism and Jainism both thrived on state patronage, and had initiated a number of princes and influential citizens into their order who exercised considerable influence on the general population. One of the ten precepts for a *Śramaṇa*, a novice, demanded abstention from witnessing dance, music and other performances [1]. In the country of Tamilnad, the Buddhist and Jain monks censured the actors and compelled royalty to prevent their households from participating in such profanities [2]. The joyous note of the Sangam age in Tamil literary works gradually gave place to a pessimistic attitude towards life because of the emphasis laid by Buddhists on the sorrows of life. They gloried in the doctrine of suppression of all delights and joys [3]. We have inscriptional evidence of Aśoka banning all performances—if this is the sense of the word *samājo* in the text—throughout his vast

[1]) Nalinaksha Dutt, in *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 375 f. However, it cannot be said precisely if the restrictions were meant for the monks alone or even for the people.

[2]) Varadrajan, in BNS, p. 424. See also quotation from *Sūryanārāyaṇa Shastriar* in the footnotes.

[3]) Nilakanta Sastri, *The Colas*, pp. 94-95.

territories [1]). That Aśoka was a very stern monarch and an avowed zealot of the Buddhist faith, is proved by the reaction of his grandsons. Unlike his own son Mahendra, none of the grandsons embraced Buddhism after him. In fact as a reaction to his zeal several members of his family were not favourably disposed towards Buddhism [2]). His fanatic attitude must have affected the growth of these fine arts adversely.

References to dance and drama have been frequently made in the extant Buddhist literature but no definite date can be assigned to most of these well-known works. The Lalitavistara describes that Buddha was well accomplished in the dramatic art [3]). It is also stated that he viewed life as a great drama, corresponding to the Shakespearian explanation of life in seven distinct stages [4]). King Bimbisāra was known to have permitted a stage performance in which the Sūtradhāra played the role of Buddha [5]). According to another legend recorded in the Avadānaśataka [6]), the same troupe was later invited to Rājagṛha where the charming actress Kuvalayā seduced many pious monks by her histrionic talents and uncommon physical attraction. Apprehensive of her overpowering influence, as the tradition maintains, the Enlightened One transformed her into a hideous woman and made her emerge as a saintly figure later. This act of transforming a beautiful figure into an ugly shape may not be found agreeable nowadays but at least in legends Oriental despotism allowed such transformations in view of the greater good it brought in its wake. Quite puzzling is Buddha's other plan in separating his cousin Nanda from his lovely and devoted wife Sundarī [7]). It was through a pre-meditated plan of coaxing, pursuasions, imprisonment and seduction that Buddha broke the married life of a devoted couple and finally initiated them into the Buddhist fold. One of the epithets of Buddha is *mārajit*, vanquisher of Cupid, since he refused to be beguiled by celestial beauties. Apparently, Buddha's antipathic attitude to

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1) Girnar Rock edict No. 1.
2) N. Dutt, in *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 383.
3) *Lalitavistara*, XII; Keith, SD, p. 43.
4) *As You Like It*, Cambridge (1926), Act II, Sc. II, p. 38.
5) Schiefner, *Indische Studien*, III, 483; *Indian Tales*, pp. 236 ff.; Keith, SD, p. 43.
6) *Avadānaśataka*, II, 24. See also II, 17 and III, 30.
7) *Saundarānanda*, cantos IV to VIII.

dance-drama and other kindred arts must have exercised a considerably depressing influence on recreations and theatrical performances as evidenced by AŚOKA's attitude. He devoted his great energy and all the powerful resources to the realisation of his ideal of *Dhamma*, the moral conduct or 'law' [1]). Dhamma is the subject of all his edicts. He assumed the role of a teacher interfering in the life of the people. In such circumstances of austerity and rigidity there could not be much scope for the development of dance and drama.

By the time Kanishka occupied the throne, Buddhism had ended its peak period. We should not be surprised that AŚVAGHOṢA could compose his Sanskrit poems and dramas in the reign of a Kushan king who seems to have been well-disposed towards the adoption of Sanskrit as an official language. At a Council of the Buddhist Order held under his direct patronage, three Sanskrit commentaries on Buddhist canonical texts were recognised [2]). The earliest inscription in pure Sanskrit is also believed to belong to this period. No doubt AŚVAGHOṢA composed his works for the laity, but the credit of employing the medium of Sanskrit must legitimately be shared by the patron and his protégé. Though AŚVAGHOṢA depicts the faithlessness and fickleness of women branding them as a potential cause of man's downfall, that old note of self-mortification is changed and the earlier prejudices appear to have melted. He seems even to have avoided any reminiscense of earlier Buddhist texts. Fascinated by his motive of selling Buddhist principles in attractive packets, he dramatized the theme of the conversion of Sāriputra and Maudgalayāna in a nine-act Prakaraṇa known as Sāriputra-Prakaraṇa [3]). In addition to this Prakaraṇa, the MS. contains fragments of two other plays which though lacking in proof of authorship, seem to have been composed to edify Buddhist philosophy through certain allegorical characters. The Prakaraṇa conforms to the established traditions of Nāṭyaśāstra with slight variations here and there, which shows that by the beginning of the Christian era the dramatic traditions were well established and the poet had some models before him.

[1]) T. W. RHYS DAVIDS, *Aśoka*, in Buddhist India, Calcutta (1955), pp. 162-66.

[2]) *Ibid.*, pp. 176-77.

[3]) LÜDERS, *Bruchstücke Buddhistischer Dramen*, pp. 17-24.

The two fragmentary plays attributed to AŚVAGHOṢA, as far as can be judged from their present state, are not wanting in the comic element. For he not only introduces Vidūṣaka in his plays but also a hetaera by the name of Mugdhāvatī appears in the allegorical play so as to heighten the dramatic effect. It is a strange coincidence that the earliest surviving Sanskrit plays should be those of a Buddhist author. It is in striking contrast to the early Buddhist religious leaders who made no pretension of their aversion to dance and dramatic performances.

Aśoka was an ambitious monarch and he aimed at achieving many things in his lifetime. But it is doubtful if he was equally good as a statesman for he left his vast empire in a disintegrated state which soon crumbled away. After his death Buddhism ceased to be a force. It gained popularity after the establishment of the Mahāyāna doctrine, which was more tolerant and introduced several reforms in the existing order [1]). It is only at that comparatively later period that scenes of dance, drama, music and other enjoyments were widely portrayed in Stūpas and other monuments. With increasing Brāhmaṇical influence a vast population of Buddhists migrated to neighbouring countries carrying with them the Indian traditions. They contributed to the spread of the arts of dance and music as they might have shed their earlier rigid characteristics [2]). Moreover they could ill afford to clash with the local populations which were already hypnotised by the early immigrants from the South. It is mentioned in the later traditions that Buddha witnessed dramas in his previous births [3]). The frescoes at Ajanta, showing a remarkable appreciation of dance and drama belong to this period [4]). It can be assumed that though the founder and his early followers were opposed to demonstrations of dance, drama and music, posterity, regardless of the old prejudices, maintained a reasonable interest in these pursuits. In succeeding periods citizens, monks, and royalty, all sought pleasure in the company of hetaeras and subscribed to the maintenance of the institution of the Nagaravadhūs. That Ambapālī was an influential

[1]) N. DUTT, in *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 389.
[2]) BOWERS, *Theatre in the East*, pp. 3-4.
[3]) *Avadānaśataka*, II, 24.
[4]) Ajanta Cave No. 1. The painting showing MAHĀJANAKA and five artistes is remarkable for its freshness and art value.

courtesan of her time is proved by Buddhist works. Because of her extraordinary beauty she was made national property '*gaṇabhogyā*' and according to tradition she succeeded in inviting Buddha to her dwelling before she emerged as a virtuous lady [1]).

The Jain scriptures record many illustrations supporting the existence of dance and drama. The ancient texts known as *Āgamaśāstra* refer to an interesting feature of dance-drama representation while staging the life account of lord Mahāvīra. In this performance a troupe of about 160 young actors and actresses displayed their histrionic talents in 32 sequences [2]). The Rāyapaseṇīya describe 32 types of dramas, some of which are included in the Nāṭyaśāstra and other treatises on dramaturgy [3]). A few dramatic pieces like Mahuyarīgīya, Soyāmani and Raṭṭhavāla are mentioned in the Jain texts [4]). The last drama Raṭṭhavāla dealing with BHARATA's life is said to have been staged before a large audience consisting of princes and kings. Tradition maintains that, impressed by the performance and compelling acting, several kings turned recluse and joined an ascetic order. Fearing that such a piece would cause incalculable harm to the prosperity of the Kṣatriya race, the drama had to be destroyed. However these traditions are on the whole of an unreliable nature because the chronology of their sources cannot be fixed. Moreover the authors have always wilfully mixed facts with fiction.

The general attitude of Jain leaders towards women was that of apathy [5]). Women are described as faithless, ungrateful, treacherous, and were recommended to be kept down. Fanciful etymologies emphasising their bad points are adduced by Jain canonical works. On the whole the Jain sect was comparatively austere and rigid and preached a doctrine of repression. It is doubtful if the Jains would willingly contribute to the development of drama. As Jain and Buddhist leaders preferred the use of popular languages to that of Sanskrit, they would have, at best, contributed

[1]) *Vinayavastu of Mūlasarvāstivāda*, p. 17 f. For details see B. C. LAW, *Ancient Mid-Indian Kṣatriya Tribes*, Vol. I, Calcutta (1924), p. 137; *The Age of Imperial Unity*, pp. 568-70.

[2]) V. S. AGRAWAL, *The Ancient Indian Stage*, BNS, pp. 53-57.

[3]) J. C. JAIN, *Life in Ancient India as depicted in the Jain Canons*, Bombay (1947), pp. 184-85.

[4]) *Ibid.*, p. 186.

[5]) *Ibid.*, pp. 152-53.

to the maintenance of popular forms of enjoyments. From the surviving plays in Sanskrit and references in the books on dramaturgy it can be deduced that, except Aśvaghoṣa, no other poet composed any play in Sanskrit.

2. Śūdraka: The Author of Mṛcchakaṭika

Call it the force of circumstances or irony of events that, of the earliest surviving dramas in Sanskrit literature, the earliest belong to a Buddhist poet. Equally intriguing is the status enjoyed by the 'Little clay cart', whose authorship and theme are still a subject of unending controversy. The Mṛcchakaṭika of Śūdraka was earlier claimed to be the first Indian drama [1]. But its position was overshadowed by the sudden discovery of Cārudatta of Bhāsa, which is popularly regarded as an earlier model of Śūdraka's play. It was Sylvain Lévi [2] who, challenging the views of Wilson, finally repudiated the findings of Windisch [3]. Wilson had taken enormous pains to adduce similarities between Mṛcchakaṭika and the New Attic Comedy; on the basis of these he ascribed an early date to Śūdraka's composition. Since then a legion of eastern and western scholars has discussed the problem from all possible angles. These divergent views are ably recorded by Sten Konow [4] and K. C. Mahandale [5]. The opinions expressed and the dates ascribed are so divergent that they could easily form an independent treatise if discussed in detail. However only the main features of the problem relating to its authorship and the social background reflected in the play are summed up here; inasmuch as they indicate beyond doubt that Śūdraka's antecedents are dubious, and that he had purposely selected a theme exalting a non-Aryan regime over a tyrant Brāhmaṇical royalty.

Though references to the legendary name of Śūdraka are very numerous, no convincing proofs of his antiquity are yet available.

[1] Wilson, TOH, pp. 53-57. On the basis of a reference in *Skandapurāṇa* the author identifies Śūdraka with Simuka of the Āndhrabhṛtya dynasty and considered *Mṛcchakaṭika* as the first play in Sanskrit.

[2] Lévi, TI, p. 198.

[3] Berichte der Sächs. Gesellsch. d. Wissenschaften (1885), p. 439f.; Keith, SD, p. 130; De, HSL, p. 242.

[4] Konow, ID, p. 57. See also Bhandarkar, *Ancient History of India*, p. 64 f.

[5] K. C. Mahandale, *Bhandarkar Commemoration Volume I*, Poona (1917), p. 367.

Curiously enough he styles himself *dvija-mukhyatamaḥ* [1]) which runs counter to reason, because no highborn person, much less a learned king, would allow himself to be addressed as ŚŪDRAKA, a diminutive amongst the low-born. That not much reliance can be placed on the authenticity of the prologue is further confirmed by another claim avering that ŚŪDRAKA entered the fire having performed the horse sacrifice at the age of a hundred years and ten days. This indicates that the prologue was added at a later date and can in no way be regarded authentic. He is first alleged to have been mentioned by RĀMILA and SOMILA [2]), the two predecessors of KĀLIDĀSA. Among the later writers DAṆḌIN, VĀMANA, BĀṆA, SOMADEVA, KALHAṆA, BHOJA, RĀJAŚEKHARA, HEMACANDRA and many others mention him as a romantic hero but seldom as a poet-dramatist. The fact that RĀMILA and SOMILA wrote a narrative of the name of Śūdrakakathā as attested by RĀJAŚEKHARA confirms ŚŪDRAKA's legendary character and helps in placing him as prior to KĀLIDĀSA. If this be true it refutes the theory of JAGIRDAR [3]) who on the most flimsy arguments ascribes the play to a period between the fall of the Gupta empire and the rise of Harṣa.

The late Col. WILFORD [4]) identified ŚŪDRAKA with the founder of the Andhra dynasty in the South, beginning with year 192 of our era. The legends connecting ŚŪDRAKA and Andhrabhṛtyas and Śātavāhanas (Śālivāhanas) are by no means dependable as they contain much of a mythical character. Professor KONOW [5]) identified him with an historical character in the Ābhīra prince Śivadatta, who himself, or his son, as mentioned by FLEET, overthrew the Andhra dynasty in about 248-49 A.D. This theory is well substantiated by the internal evidence in the drama, in depicting king Pālaka of Ujjayinī as overthrown by Āryaka a '*Gopāla-*

[1]) *Mṛcchakaṭika*, I, 3 '*dvijamukhyatamaḥ kavir babhūva*'.

[2]) RĀJAŚEKHARA mentions ŚŪDRAKA in the following verse, quoted in *Sūktimuktāvali*, p. 43:

> '*tau Śūdrakakathākārau ramyau Rāmilasomilau*
> *kāvyaṃ yayor dvayor āsid ardhanārīnaropamau*'.

[3]) JAGIRDAR, DSL, pp. 102-03.

[4]) See WILSON, TOH, p. 53.

[5]) KONOW, *Zur Frühgesch. d. ind. Theaters*, in *Festschrift-E. Kuhn*, München (1917), p. 107 f.; ID, pp. 57-59; KEITH, SD, p. 129. See also BHANDARKAR, *The Ancient History of India*, p. 64 f.

dāraka' son of a herdsman and an Ābhīra by caste [1]. The fact that the Ābhīras at one time founded a kingdom in the northern part of the Mahārāṣṭra country, is further supported by the discovery of Nasik inscriptions [2], commemorating the ninth year of king Iśvarasena, son of the Ābhīra Prince Śivadatta. However, KONOW's views were severely criticised by J. CHARPENTIER [3] and WINTERNITZ [4]. It is difficult to subscribe to the theory of JACOBI [5], who merely on astronomical grounds maintained that the sixth act of Mṛcchakaṭika could never have been written before the fourth century A.D. No doubt astronomy is supposed by some to be the queen of sciences but the data supplied by astronomical evidence cannot always be substantiated and as such is beyond the comprehension of the average person.

On the basis of a detailed study of the play, the Buddhist sources in Jātakas, and finally of the Tamil poem Shilappadikāram, RUBEN [6] draws interesting parallels. According to him Āryaka belonged to some pre-Aryan strata of herdsmen to which the Iranian herdsmen, Toḍas, Kṛṣṇas also known as Gopālas, all belonged. All these clans are found scattered far and wide in Sindh and Marwar and perhaps belonged to the Lunar dynasty. By allowing Āryaka to usurp the throne of Ujjayinī, ŚŪDRAKA distinctly betrays his anti-Brāhmanic attitude. As mentioned earlier the prologue of the play is full of inconsistencies which render it useless for the purpose of evidence. It is strange that despite being a king ŚŪDRAKA shows some kind of anti-aristocratic feelings by elevating the character of all the minor actors.

Relying too much on the occurrence of a verse commonly found in the Mṛcchakaṭika and the Kāvyādarśa of DAṆḌIN, PISCHEL [7] declared the latter to be the author of Mṛcchakaṭika. This hypothesis was generally rejected by all but was later supported by KAR-

[1]) BHANDARKAR, *o.c.*, p. 64. See also his Collected Works, IV, Poona (1929), p. 53; KEITH, SD, p. 129.

[2]) LÜDERS, *List of Brāhmi Inscriptions*, No. 1137.

[3]) J. CHARPENTIER, JRAS, 1923, p. 595 f.

[4]) M. WINTERNITZ, *Geschichte der indischen Literatur* III, Leipzig (1920), p. 203, n. 2.

[5]) H. JACOBI, *Bhavisattha Kaha*, p. 83 note.

[6]) W. RUBEN, *Oriens*, I, Leiden (1948), pp. 80-87.

[7]) See PISCHEL, in RUDRABHAṬṬA's *Śṛṅgāratilaka*, Bombay (1910), p. 18.

MARKAR [1]) on inconclusive grounds. However, KARMARKAR has convincingly proved that ŚŪDRAKA was a southerner [2]). In act X of the play, the goddess Durgā is extolled as *sahyavāsinī* which is typical of a southerner. In the North this goddess is popular as *vindhyavāsinī*. ŚŪDRAKA refers to *Karṇāṭa*, *Draviḍa* and *Cola* and also uses some expressions intimately associated with the South. The fact that ŚŪDRAKA was a southerner is further confirmed by the extensive researches made by SALETORE [3]), who treats the author as an historical figure identifying him with Śivamara I who ruled between A.D. 675 to 725. According to SALETORE Candanaka's speech using the phrase '*Karṇāṭa-kalaha-prayoga*' smacks of the aggressive nature of the Kannaḍigas. Besides the geographical references made by ŚŪDRAKA also point to the author's bias for the South. The names Kuśāvatī and Veṇā are the names of two rivers in the Deccan. The term *kāṇelīmālaḥ* seems to refer to some old family with Kāṇelī as a variation of *kaṇṇahaḷḷi*, the term '*mālaḥ*' corresponding to a popular suffix form of '*ammā*', commonly used in the South. The names ŚŪDRAKA and CĀRUDATTA have been quite popular in the history of the Deccan. The merchant princes have very often been compared to CĀRUDATTA. All these references convincingly show that the author belonged to the South, where dance and drama traditions were deep-rooted. PUSALKAR'S [4]) theory in identifying ŚŪDRAKA with king Vikramāditya of the 3rd century B.C. failed to get support for lack of evidence.

Another interesting view is that of Dr. PANDEY [5]), who identifies ŚŪDRAKA with the Śātavāhana king Pulūmayī of circa 130-159 A.D. On the basis of similarities between Mṛcchakaṭika and Shilappadikāram, numerous references recorded in the inscriptions of Śātavāhana kings, the author's apparent bias for Prākrit languages, and finally the social background reflected in the play, PANDEY

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1) R. D. KARMARKAR, Proceedings of Oriental Conference, Trivandrum 1937; his article in New Indian Ant. II (1939-40), pp. 76-85; his *Mṛcchakaṭika*, Poona (1937), pp. VIII-IX.

2) KARMARKAR, New Indian Ant. II (1939-40), p. 83.

3) B. A. SALETORE, *King Śūdraka, An Historical Study*, Journal of the University of Bombay, July 1947, XVI, part I; January 1948, part IV.

4) A. D. PUSALKAR, JAHRS, XI, pp. 33-42. Dr. PUSALKAR has traced no less than 27 Śūdrakas but he treats only three as historical personalities. He identifies ŚŪDRAKA with Vikramāditya placing him in the third century before Christ.

5) C. B. PANDEY, *Śūdraka*, Banaras (1958), pp. 8-38, 288-89.

recognises in ŚŪDRAKA the Śātavāhana prince Pulūmayī who was also known as son of Vāśiṣṭhi. His ingenious suggestion of making BHĀSA a court poet of ŚŪDRAKA, though not supported by any cogent evidence, needs a closer investigation as it may help in solving the Cārudatta problem. According to PANDEY, BHĀSA as a court poet started composing the play but may have been claimed by a sudden death leaving the work incomplete. ŚŪDRAKA PULŪMAYĪ, who was himself a poet, not only completed the play but also introduced the political episode and a romantic theme, which might have been based on his own experience.

Who were these Ābhīras for whom ŚŪDRAKA seems to have a tremendous regard? According to Dr. BHANDARKAR [1]) they were living in India long before the advent of the Christian era with their headquarters at the famous city of Ujjayinī. The father of king Pradyota was their acknowledged leader. Gopāla and Pālaka were his sons and Āryaka was a grandson. SIRCAR [2]) identifies this Ābhīra country lying between Herāt and Kandahār, which was also known by the name of Ābhīrawan. PATAÑJALI [3]) refers to the tribes of Śūdrābhīram, which proves that round about the second century before the birth of Christ, the Ābhīra settlements were considered to belong to the Śūdras. The two tribes are further mentioned in MBH [4]) and Vāyupurāṇa [5]) indicating that their early settlement lay somewhere in the Punjab. In ALEXANDER's time they were known as Sodroi [6]), which is a variation of Śūdra. Further they were found settled in the Lower Indus valley, that country being referred to as Ābīra by the Periplus and PTOLEMY [7]). That from the earliest times the Ābhīras were an aggressive type of people, is confirmed by an incident narrated in MBH [8]). They carried off perforce all the beautiful Yādava ladies from the custody of Arjuna who was escorting them to the city of Hāstinapura. It is also mentioned in MBH that the Kṣatriyas afraid of Paraśurāma

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[1]) BHANDARKAR, *Indian Culture*, pp. 15-16; his Collected Works IV, pp. 52-53.

[2]) D. C. SIRCAR, *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 221.

[3]) *Mah. B.*, edition KIELHORN, Pt. I, Bombay (1892), 252.

[4]) MBH, *Sabhāparva*, 1192; *Śalyaparva*, 2719.

[5]) *Vāyupurāṇa*, Vol. II, Ch. 37, p. 453.

[6]) SIRCAR, *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 221 f.

[7]) *Ibid.*, p. 221. The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea and the Geography of PTOLEMY locate the Ābhīra country between Sindhu valley and Kathiawar.

[8]) MBH, *Mausalaparva*, Ch. VII.

took to hiding. Since they could not perform the regular religious rites and caste-functions, they had to be graded as Śūdrābhīras. MANU [1]) says that a child born of a Brāhmaṇa *ambaṣṭhā* from a (Śūdrā) mother, is Ābhīra. All the above evidence indicates that the Ābhīras were regarded a low class. Intercourse between the wandering tribes of Ābhīras and their more civilised Aryan neighbours must have upset the priestly class. It is possible that lured by the physical charms of Ābhīra girls, the Aryan youth endangered the sanctity of the Aryan race and thus may have incurred the displeasure of the priests [2]). Kṛṣṇa and Gopāla legends, believed to have been added later, support this admixture of races. By showing preference for this community of the low born, ŚŪDRAKA exhibited his own bias in no smaller degree.

Whatever be the date and the achievements of the play, the fact remains that ŚŪDRAKA could never have been a Kṣatriya or a Brāhmaṇa king as depicted in the prologue of the play. Instead of showing any leanings towards the Brāhmaṇical priesthood, he supported the plebians in their upheaval and introduced a large number of characters drawn from the lower order of society, which otherwise were ignored by more famous dramatists. Not content with these deviations, he exalted the role of a courtesan raising her to the status of a lady. Vasantasenā, a dancing girl of Ujjayinī, emerges a noble, pious and devoted woman to her love. Perhaps she could never attain this status if she were to marry a character of equal rank. Though such cases of love were neither rare nor shocking, yet none showed enough boldness to make them the theme of a play or a poem. Possibly the theme reflects a period when the injunctions of the Law-givers were not effective [3]). Another striking point of the drama lies in its abounding descriptions of abject poverty, not handled by any other poet. According to RUBEN [4]) 'the poet-king ŚŪDRAKA has extolled only poor men in his drama', the gambler, the impoverished Bhrāmaṇa who breaks into people's houses and the hearts of maidens, and the police officer indulging in discussion so as to permit Āryaka to escape, are all chosen from the world of the under-dog. Nowhere

[1]) *Manusmṛti*, X, 15.
[2]) BHANDARKAR, *Collected Works* IV, p. 53.
[3]) WILSON, TOH, p. 55.
[4]) RUBEN, in *Oriens* 1948, Vol. 1, 1, p. 86.

in the entire range of Sanskrit literature, has a description of poverty been introduced so effectively, because mostly the plays and poems were composed by the protégés of kings.

ŚŪDRAKA makes no pretension about his great regard for the use of Prākrits and twice records his disapproval of women expressing themselves in Sanskrit [1]. Even though well-versed in the Vedic lore and other branches of learning, his bias for Prākrits is obvious. He possessed the qualities of an accomplished poet and his composition of verses not rarely leaves much to be desired. He also uses expressions which cannot be called strictly grammatical.

From the foregoing discussion and arguments it can be safely assumed that in ŚŪDRAKA we have a dramatist who had little love for the established traditions and who knew how to handle a theme. Whatever his merits it is evident that, for his wilful breach of regulations, deviations from the beaten track, and finally, total disregard for established Brāhmaṇical traditions, he had to pay a heavy penalty as he was seldom quoted in the anthologies and treatises on poetics. It is intriguing that KĀLIDĀSA takes no notice of him but then the SHAKESPEARE of India is equally reticent about AŚVAGHOṢA who certainly flourished before him. Strange though it may appear, it is a hard fact that the first dramatist of Sanskrit literature was a Buddhist, and a close second hails, as far as can be seen, from a non-Aryan stock of which so little is known.

3. THE YĀTRĀ PERFORMANCE

The Yātrā performances as they exist in Bengal to-day, represent some ancient popular folk-traditions which may have been current in the earliest period of Indian history or even before that [2]. It is not known how and when these performances came to be called Yātrās. In the extant Sanskrit literature we have the testimony of BHAVABHŪTI whose plays were staged at the Yātrā feast of Kālapriya, which comes very near the modern conception of a Yātrā. As evident from his prologue, MURĀRI's Anargharāghava was also said to be staged at a Yātrā performance. It would be difficult to say with any degree of precision if the modern form of

[1]) *Mṛcchakaṭika,* Act III: *'strī tāvat saṃskṛtaṃ paṭhantī dattavanasyeva gṛṣṭiḥ adhikaṃ sūsūśabdaṃ karoti"* (in Prākrit).

[2]) P. GUHA-THAKURTA, *The Bengali Drama,* London (1930), p. 1.

Yātrās is a legacy from the past, or if the character of the performance has undergone some changes during the course of its long history. However the problem has been discussed at greater length by several scholars in both East and West and the discussions have helped in disseminating useful information about the characteristics of the performance.

For want of adequate evidence it is difficult to agree with HORRWITZ [1]) who maintains that the Ṛgvedic gods were hymned in choral processions and the dialogue hymns are replete with Yātrā dances. HERTEL [2]) identified Yātrās with the latest stage of Vedic drama: this was based on conjecture and does not deserve serious consideration. However, several scholars supported the view that the Indian drama in general and the Yātrās in particular owe their origin to the Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa worship. It was SCHROEDER [3]) who while building the theory of the Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa cult referred to Gītagovinda of JAYADEVA as a typical representative of the Yātrās of Bengal. HORRWITZ [4]) maintained that all the Yātrās, like sacred opera shows, were invariably associated with Kṛṣṇa worship. LÉVI [5]) agreed with this view in general. Dr. KARL MANTZIUS [6]), a famous critic on drama and theatre, suggested that scenic art in India is closely connected with the worship of Viṣṇu. But he admitted that the theory lacked proper proofs. Undoubtedly there is much evidence showing drama's connection with Kṛṣṇa-Viṣṇu. PATAÑJALI in Mah. Bh. refers to Kṛṣṇa's slaying of Kaṃsa. According to tradition the first drama enacted in heaven had the theme of *Lakṣmī-svayaṃvara*. KEITH [7]) though not in complete agreement with the theory, feels that Kṛṣṇa worship must have given impulse to the dramatic traditions in India. Lastly, the Gītagovinda itself

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1) E. P. HORRWITZ, *The Indian Theatre*, London (1912), p. 178 f.

2) Von J. HERTEL, *Der Ursprung des indischen Dramas und Epos*, VOJ, XVIII, pp. 59 ff., 137 ff. Also his *Der Suparṇādhyāya, ein Vedisches Mysterium*, VOJ, XXIII, pp. 273 ff.

3) L. v. SCHROEDER, *Mysterium und Mimus im Ṛgveda*, Leipzig (1889). Also VOJ, XXII, p. 223 ff.; XXXIII, p. 1 ff. and 270 ff. For Gītagovinda see *Indische Literatur und Kultur in historischer Entwicklung*, Leipzig (1887), p. 580.

4) HORRWITZ, *Indian Theatre*, p. 178.

5) LÉVI, TI, p. 394.

6) K. MANTZIUS, *A History of Theatrical Art in Ancient and Modern Times*, Vol. I, London (1903), p. 4.

7) KEITH, SD, p. 45.

is an eloquent representative of idyllic Kṛṣṇa worship, which was later followed by Vidyāpati, Caṇḍīdāsa and Caitanya and several others. RIDGEWAY adducing arguments in support of his wellknown theory of the animistic origin of drama, accepted the probable origin of drama in Kṛṣṇa worship.

However, these scholars concentrated on one aspect of the Yātrās only. The mere fact that the Yātrā performances in Bengal have a preponderance of Kṛṣṇa themes, is no argument to renounce all other relevant factors. We know that the god Śiva occupied a prominent place in the religious life of the Indians. He is not only intimately connected with the Indian drama but is known to be the king of dancers. His two wives are associated with tender and dreadful dances. His servant NANDĪ is an authority on dance and music and his Gaṇas, the associates, are famous for their dances. In the Śaivāgama [1]) and Tantric texts his devotees are recommended to dance and revel. The poet KĀLIDĀSA regards him as the author of dance-drama and refers to his dances in Meghadūta [2]). In short Śiva's role in the evolution of dance and drama is more solid and varied. Besides the range of the Yātrās was never confined to Kṛṣṇa alone. Several Yātrā performances deal with Śiva, Śakti, Rāma, Vidyāsundara, Caṇḍī and Manasā Devī traditions [3]). In fact the themes of the Yātrās were freely borrowed from Rāmāyaṇa, Mahābhārata, Purāṇas, legends and folk-legends. Moreover, it is a patent mistake to connect the Gītagovinda with the Bengali Yātrās. The poem is composed in Sanskrit and only resembles the Yātrā traits as far as Kṛṣṇa worship is concerned.

It was mainly due to the revival of the Bhakti devotional school in India that Kṛṣṇa worship became more popular in the middle ages [4]), when all the arts, especially dance-drama and music traditions, were woven around Kṛṣṇa and his love-episodes. His dalliance with the Gopikās, the cowherd maids, provided a romantic theme for popular folk-performances. In Bengal Śiva was replaced by Viṣṇu and Śakti and in the North and North-east Rāma was pushed into the background by Kṛṣṇa. But this is quite a late phase of the popular forms which have survived in several shapes

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[1]) GUHA-THAKURTA, *Bengali Drama*, p. 7.
[2]) *Meghadūta*, I, 39 (36).
[3]) GUHA-THAKURTA, *The Bengali Drama*, pp. 10-11.
[4]) *Ibid.*, p. 14.

of Rāsa, Rāmalīlā, Bhāgavatam, Lalita, Bhavāi and several other forms [1]).

The Yātrās are a loose narration of some epic or mythological episodes with a preponderance of love-songs. The songs have no direct bearing on the main narrative but take almost three-fourths of the total duration. Another ludicrous feature is the cheap, vulgar and farcical sequences which are inserted to give comic relief to the audience. There is no attempt to improve the level or character of the performance but as the theme is mostly from a known source the audience is supposed to be familiar with that. Whatever may be the drawbacks of the Yātrās they still exercise a tremendous influence on the masses. The Yātrās furnish a good clue to the supposition that perhaps at all times the élite had their elegant plays, but the masses, used to popular modes of pastimes, developed their own traditions. As the term Yātrā signifies at one time it must have been customary for the worshippers to organise a procession in honour of the god, as practised in the Kulu valley even nowadays on the occasion of Daśaharā festival. The procession must have been accompanied with usual elements of dance-drama and music. Even when Yātrā disengaged itself from the religious ceremonies, it retained the original name signifying a 'procession'.

4. The Role of Prākrits in the Evolution of Sanskrit Drama

Long before the advent of Sanskrit dramas preserved in the extant literature, some forms of language called Prākrits were current among the general population. Generally it is believed that these were the languages of the people as opposed to Sanskrit, the language of the cultured and the learned. The Prākrits as preserved in the extant dramatic literature show a remarkable affinity to Sanskrit. The question of their origin and development has been long discussed and is not yet completely answered. The earliest of the grammarians Vararuci mentioned four such languages or dialects which he considered as derived from Sanskrit. These are *Mahārāṣṭrī*, *Paiśācī*, *Māgadhī* and *Śaurasenī* [2]). Daṇḍin [3])

[1]) Gupta, IT, pp. 160-62.
[2]) Vararuci,' *Prakritprakāśa*, Madras (1946), pp. 143-150; Guṇe, *Comparative Philology*, p. 220. Also R. Pischel, *Grammatik der Prākrit Sprachen*, Strassburg (1900), p. 34.
[3]) *Kāvyādarśa*, I, 32-37.

a later writer of the seventh century, recognised, apart from Sanskrit, only three such forms: Prākrit, Apabhraṃśa and a mixed language which he calls *miśra*. But he was not prepared to allow these dialects the status of a language and called them *deśibhāṣitam*, the native dialects. Modern research is inclined to derive these Prākrits and the Pāli language from sources other than Sanskrit. Whatever may be the source or nature of their origin, there is general agreement on the fact that some of these languages were intimately associated with the Sanskrit drama from its very beginning. How and when the Prākrits came to be associated with drama is a matter of conjecture and research. Views sometimes diametrically opposite to each other have been expressed to explain the origin and development of these literary Prākrits.

When the Indo-Aryans entered the land, called Āryāvarta at the later period, they did not find the country desolate and uninhabited. As reflected in the Vedic texts, this country was inhabited by several pre-Aryan clans including Dāsas or Dasyus, with whom the Aryans came in conflict. The Aryans inflicted a crushing defeat on these people bringing them gradually under their control. Thereafter not only did the triumphant Aryans inflict their rule, but also their own language, the language of the conquerors. It is assumed that a great part of the original inhabitants learnt the new language as children pick up their mother tongue [1]. They completely surrendered to the invincible power of the Aryan race but not without affecting the language and literature of the conquerors [2]. Whatever was harsh they softened and whatever was difficult they simplified. In this process the primitive inhabitants must have been influenced by the prevailing tendencies of their own dialects. The Aryan language thus became altered in the mouth of the natives and the modified form together with the newly acquired Dravidian vocabulary reacted upon the Aryan

[1]) P. D. GUṆE, *A Comparative Philology*, Poona (1950), p. 234.

[2]) K. RAMKRISHNAIH, *Dravidian Problems, Studies in Dravidian Philology*, Madras (1935), pp. 9-13. 'It is in the close intermingling of Non-Aryans and the Aryan tribes in North India speaking different languages and having different cultures of their own, that we have to trace the origin of Prākrits . . . This contact of the Aryans with non-Aryans not only affected their language and gave rise to the new set of popular languages, called Prākrits, but has left a lasting effect on their religion and culture, bringing them closer to Hinduism, as against Vedic religion and culture.'

speech. As their contact with the original inhabitants became closer, the effect on their language grew deeper and deeper [1]. In this process of amalgamation, Sanskrit borrowed cerebral sounds and several other words of native origin, while the native dialects were influenced by Sanskrit. GUṆE feels that these Sankritised dialects came to be regarded as Prākrits [2].

The traditional view, as expressed by VARARUCI and others, considers that the term Prākrit itself denotes the fact of its being derived from some prime source which could be none other than Sanskrit [3]. PISCHEL'S [4] view reverses the position; he, relying on the literal sense of the word, is inclined to treat Prākrits as natural language *i.e.* the language as it might have grown up among the people spontaneously. GEORGE GRIERSON [5] explained the growth of these Prākrits in a wider sense, classifying them in three distinct stages, which is supported by CHATTERJI [6]. According to this classification the Primary Prākrits or the Old Indo-Aryan speech comprise both the Vedic and the earliest form of the classical Sanskrit. Secondary Prākrits or the Middle Indo-Aryan speech are represented by Pāli, Prākrits and the Apabhraṃśa. The Tertiary Prākrits or the new Indo-Aryan speech are represented in the modern Indian vernaculars. This classification may be convenient but it seldom indicates the process of change and transformation in between the periods. DAS GUPTA [7] feels that Sanskrit had become almost stereotyped in the middle of the second century before Christ. At that period the local dialects grew into those artificial languages called Prākrits. He further maintains that these Prākrits are not the spoken languages of the particular regions with which they appear to be associated in name because these should be regarded as standardised artificial forms developed for the use of literature though at bottom they may be representing an earlier living language which may have been conventionalized. [8]

It may not be possible to explain the exact nature of the origin

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 14.
[2] GUṆE, *Comparative Philology*, pp. 197-98.
[3] KEITH, HSL, pp. 26-27.
[4] PISCHEL, *Grammatik der Prākrit-Sprachen* (1900), § 16.
[5] KEITH, HSL, pp. 26-7.
[6] S. K. CHATTERJI, *The Origin and Development of the Bengali Language*, Calcutta (1926), pp. 16-19.
[7] DAS GUPTA and DE, HSL, p. CXX.
[8] *Ibid.*, p. CXXI, see also p. 683.

of the Prākrits but as they exist they appear to be essentially of Aryan origin representing a somewhat advanced stage of the spoken languages of the mixed population. They must have developed in a natural way and while spreading over large regions have become differentiated, borrowing elements from the native (Dravidian and Muṇḍa) idioms. Their literary forms may have been slightly conventionalized. Although the Brāhmaṇas used their classical Sanskrit, these dialects continued their development unchecked and in the course of years the gulf between Sanskrit and the Prākrits became wider. This gulf was more prominent in the East where later arose the anti-Vedic and anti-Brāhmaṇic socio-religious and philosophical movements of Buddhism and Jainism [1].

Tradition records the refusal of Buddha [2] to adopt Sanskrit, the language of the learned and the aristocracy, in propagating his religious beliefs. As his message was for the common good he preferred the use of Prākrits which may have been intelligible to a greater part of the people. He also enjoined his disciples to conform to this practice [3]. That is why the Buddhist canon was also redacted in some of the current Prākrits. Following his example the monarch Aśoka used these regional languages or inscriptional Prākrits in issuing his commands by edicts and the inscriptions. Our first and real knowledge of Prākrits is based on these inscriptions which reveal the existence of at least three dialects used in the eastern regions [4], in the capital, and lastly as a common *lingua franca*. The next information of a definite nature is afforded by the dramas of AŚVAGHOṢA reflecting the influence of the Prākrits about the first century after the birth of Christ. He makes use of Old Ardhamāgadhī, Old Māgadhī and Old Śaurasenī [5]. Of these the first was the dialect, as far as tradition goes, in which the Jain leader Mahāvīra preached. As the early Jain scriptures have perished the canonical works of the Śvetāmbaras and Digambaras are found redacted in the Mahārāṣṭrī and Śaurasenī forms.

To what extent Sanskrit drama was indebted to Prākrits, cannot be decided precisely. From the evidence of the earliest survi-

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[1]) M. A. MEHENDALE, in *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 282.
[2]) KEITH, SD, p. 72.
[3]) MEHENDALE, in *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 283.
[4]) KEITH, HSL, p. 27.
[5]) *Ibid.*, p. 27.

ving plays it can be inferred that the drama had to seek the co-operation of the people's language from the very beginning. As the drama was intended to provide entertainment to all the Varṇas including the common folk who had no access to the Vedas, it was but appropriate that the dialogues should have been carried out in the local dialects some of which had already attained the status of a language. As the bards and actors borrowed the recitation element from the epics, the connecting links in the form of dialogues and short commentaries must have been carried on through Prākrits only, the language of the bards, rhapsodists, minstrels and actors. It may be surmised that, generally speaking, the earliest theatrical performances were mainly conducted in Prākrit and the dramatists resorted to the use of Sanskrit whenever they introduced Brāhmaṇas as well as the cultured population. Thus the language mixture of the dramas may be explained from an actual co-existence of Sanskrit and Prākrit side by side in those circles in which the Indian theatre rose to a literary niveau. Even in the farcical representations performed at the Mahāvrata and the Soma-purchasing sacrifices, it would be improbable that the Śūdra and hetaera abusing a Brāhmaṇa, could have carried on the dialogues in any other language but the Prākrits. As the latter supplied all the dramatic element, it was not possible to eliminate them from the dramas, a position to which the priests must have become reconciled later. Therefore the later rhetoricians had to make provision for the inclusion of Prākrits as enjoined in the Nāṭyaśāstra and other books on dramaturgy. This incidentally also indicates that the drama proper arose not in the priestly circles devoted to Vedic lore but amongst people of humble rank, who were perhaps accustomed to derive pleasure from such representations. Thus, the use of Prākrits must have been an established tradition from the very beginning, which doubtless enhanced the productive values of the plays. It may be supposed that being adopted by the leading classes the drama was in the course of time more sanskritized.

From the references made by VARARUCI and PATAÑJALI, it becomes clear that at least four forms of Prākrits were in use towards the close of the third century before Christ [1]. Later, as the Aryans spread out in different parts of India and the process of Aryaniza-

[1] GUṆE, *Comparative Philology*, pp. 220-21. See also O. FRANKE, *Pāli and Sanskrit*, Strassburg (1902), p. 50.

tion gained momentum, Sanskrit might have lost its position as the medium of expression among all classes of the Aryan society and its use might have been restricted to the highly-educated only. But Sanskrit was not altogether unintelligible even to the lower strata as may be inferred from its extensive use in the dramas [1]). The growing popularity of the Prākrits must have given a considerable set-back to Sanskrit as evidenced by the number of Prākrit inscriptions. Nearly 1500 inscriptions in Prākrits as against a dozen in Sanskrit belong to the period preceding the middle of the fourth century [2]). After the fourth century very few Prākrit inscriptions are available as the Buddhist and Jain writers had also started making use of Sanskrit after the second century [3]) of the Christian era.

Of the Prākrit languages enumerated above only Mahārāṣṭrī has some literature which was considered more suitable for lyrics and poetry reaching a climax in KĀLIDĀSA and HĀLA's Saptaśatī. Śaurasenī was normally the language of dialogues, though it is occasionally used in the verses also. Śaurasenī is the language of prose in RĀJAŚEKHARA's Karpūramañjarī which was more akin to Sanskrit than Mahārāṣṭrī. The reason being perhaps that it originated at a place which was a stronghold of Sanskrit and Brāhmaṇic influence. Māgadhī fares worst of all, it was usefully employed by ŚŪDRAKA for the low characters in the Mṛcchakaṭika. Śakārī, Bāhlīkī, and others, are regarded as sub-divisions of Māgadhī which are rarely used. The comparatively late date at which Mahārāṣṭrī attained prominence, indicates that some other form of Prākrit may have been employed for poetry before its rise. JACOBI is supposed to have found traces of such a Prākrit in the Nāṭyaśāstra [4]).

Despite the conclusive evidence of VARARUCI, no known work of the Paiśācī dialect is preserved in the Sanskrit literature extant. The tradition records that the Bṛhatkathā of GUṆĀḌHYA was composed in Paiśācī which unfortunately is lost. From references in

[1]) From this L. RENOU, *Histoire de la langue sanskrite*, Lyon (1956), p. 86 seems to infer that Sanskrit drama was from the beginning more sanskritized than it would appear to us.

[2]) MEHENDALE, in *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 284.

[3]) *Ibid.*, p. 284.

[4]) H. JACOBI, *Bhavisattha Kaha*, p. 84 ff.

MBH[1]) it is clear that the Piśācas were a tribe in the North-west region. GRIERSON [2]) locates them with the *Kambojas* in the modern Hazara district of West Pakistan. It is suggested that the Piśāca form of Prākrit grew up in India when the Achemenian kings of Persia made Bactria one of their bases. As a result of active contacts between the Indo-Aryans and the Iranians this language came into being, which was used by ŚŪDRAKA in Mṛcchakaṭika. GEORGE GRIERSON has conclusively proved that the wild tribes living in the south of the Hindukush range are the surviving representatives of the Piśācas [3]). According to one Tibetan tradition [4]) belonging to the school of Sarvāstivādins, '*sthaviras*' of some early Buddist school wrote their works in Paiśācī.

From DAṆḌIN's attitude it is clear that the grammarians and rhetoricians were not happy with this incursion of Prākrits and may probably have resented their inclusion in the dramas. The Prākrits were, it is true, closely related to Sanskrit but their popular use by people of all levels prevented them from being accepted by the higher circles. No wonder that the Sanskrit dramas could not be staged because with the element of Prākrits present in them, the '*Śiṣṭas*', the learned, were not supposed to be interested in such performances. But having once established their importance, the Prākrits could not be dislodged from their position. However, it was ŚŪDRAKA who made an extensive use of them and confirmed their suitability for stagecraft. Perhaps he possessed an uncommonly discerning eye which enabled him to determine what would heighten the dramatic effect. Conscious of the importance of Prākrits no early dramatist composed any play in Sanskrit alone, BHĀSA's Dūtavākya being the only exception to the above practice. Thus in that remote period the dramatist seemed to have realised that while Sanskrit was quite suitable for fanciful descriptions, religious subjects and the narration of epic traditions, the real drama could only be portrayed through a popular set of languages.

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[1]) MBH, *Droṇaparva*, 499.

[2]) G. GRIERSON, *Indian Antiquary* 43, p. 144.

[3]) GUṆE, *Comparative Philology*, pp. 239-40. On Paiśācī see also UPADHYE, Ann. Bhand. Inst. 21, p. 1 and A. MASTER, BSOAS 1943, p. 34; 217.

[4]) DAS GUPTA and DE, HSL, p. 685.

CHAPTER EIGHT

MALAISE: SYMPTOMS OF DECADENCE

1. Dependence on Epics

Whether the drama had its early origin in a secular, popular or religious atmosphere, the fact remains that throughout its chequered career of a thousand years or more, it received most of its impetus from the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata. These two epics, though purely Brāhmaṇical in scope and purpose, had absorbed a number of popular legends and folk-lores, a variety of doctrines. As the Vedic chants were intelligible only to the priests and the learned class, the epic recitation soon won the applause of the common-folk. Consequently the two epics exercised a wide influence both on poetry and drama, being partly an exhaustive store of ideal model episodes, and partly because of loyal submission by the poets to the fundamental injunctions prescribed by the authorities on Dramaturgy. In the golden years of the Indian Civilization, when glorification of gods and supermen was the order of the day, the poets had neither the freedom nor the will to display any originality in introducing a new theme for which they mainly turned to the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata, the traditional store-houses of the ideal episodes and ideal characters [1]).

It is strange that the older of the two epics does not show a definite familiarity with dramatic performances beyond casual mention of *Naṭa*, *Nartaka* and others. It is only in a comparatively later portion of the Mahābhārata [2]) that a passage refers to the existence of Nāṭaka, but it is doubtful if the performance was of a literary type. Moreover this passage is not found in the South Indian Recension of the Mahābhārata [3]). It is likely that in some cases epics and drama both turned to a floating mass of popular

[1]) De, HSL, pp. 50-51; Jagirdar, DSL, pp. 150-52; Hopkins, *The Great Epic of India*, p. 53.

[2]) MBH, II, 11. 36: *'nāṭakā vividhāḥ kāvyāḥ kathākhyāyika-kārikāḥ'*.

[3]) Winternitz, JRAS 1903, 571 f.Das Gupta, HSL, p. 653 fn. 2.

tales and narratives, which are preserved in the epics in a large number. Professor HILLEBRANDT [1]) sought in these stray references an allusion to full-fledged dramatic art, which is rather far-fetched. The evidence of the Harivaṃśa, describing the staging of a play based on Rāma's legend, is of no avail, as this portion was added at a time when the drama proper had already been established. However, the Rāmāyaṇa, the first and the finest specimen of ornate poetry, records evidence indicative of a dramatic performance of some type. KEITH [2]) while quoting some stanzas from the Rāmāyaṇa, seems to have overlooked this evidence, although it does not offer any definite idea of the actual dramatic form. Also it is not known if this verse was added at much later date. The verse is [3]):

nārājake janapade prahṛṣṭanaṭanartakāḥ
utsavaiś ca samājaiś ca vardhante rāṣṭravardhanāḥ

"the actors and dancers, though always in festive mood, are not happy in a state without the king. Festivals and dramatic performances always contribute to the prosperity of the country". In addition to the above, the Rāmāyaṇa preserves some other references which suggest that some type of dramatic performance did exist in Rāma's time.

The two epics, especially the Mahābhārata, exceed the limit of a definite literary genre and record narratives and descriptions beyond the scope of a poem. Since the Mahābhārata remained an open book for centuries allowing bards and rhapsodists to add their episodes in memory of their patrons, the poem assumed a popular form. The simple story of Kurus was enveloped by layers of such episodes and genealogical accounts which had no direct relation to the main story of the battle. We have so far no direct evidence of the actual form of the early dramatic performances, but it is presumed that the narration and recitation of the epic tales by professional singers may have accompanied some form of action. During the period when Brāhmaṇical lore was being propagated the bards and actors may sometimes have introduced innovations by dramatizing the tales and thus heightening their

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1) HILLEBRANDT, AID, pp. 5-6.
2) KEITH, SD, pp. 28-29.
3) *Rāmāyaṇa*, II, 67. 15; see also II, 69. 4.

effect. The references in the Mahābhāṣya[1]) of the slaying of Kaṃsa by Kṛṣṇa and binding of Bali by Viṣṇu, points to the existence of such performances where representation by action was a prime criterion [2]). This was the period when rapid fusion between the Dravidians and the Aryans was taking place. But since the recitation, singing, dancing, acting and staging of crude shows was probably to a considerable degree in non-Aryan hands the latter in all likelihood must have tried to make the shows interesting. It may be assumed that in due course these crude shows must have developed into a popular form of entertainment, finally laying the foundation of the Sanskrit drama. Thus, hypnotised by epic influence, the majority of Sanskrit dramas and poems were woven around Kṛṣṇa and Rāma legends. But as Kṛṣṇa's character was recast more than once, some of the dramas deal with such aspects of Kṛṣṇa which had little or no bearing on the Mahābhārata[3]).

In addition to the element of action, the earlier poets borrowed the tendencies of description and narration from the epics, which were evidently shared by both drama and poetry alike. The influence of epic poems is conspicuous in the Rāma legends, which are made the theme of a dozen of plays and poems. KĀLIDĀSA gently hints his indebtedness to the author of the Rāmāyaṇa [4]), who helped him making entry into the citadel of great Raghus, BHAVABHŪTI is quite conscious of the debt his drama owes to the epic [5]), but even a mediocre person like MURĀRI [6]) acknowledged the debt of VĀLMĪKI freely. RĀJAŚEKHARA, the author of the lengthiest play in Sanskrit, does not believe in humbling himself. Instead of acknowledging indebtedness, he asserts that he was himself VĀLMĪKI in his previous existence [7]). Whatever may have been the merits of such borrowings, the epics possessed an unshakable grip on the populace, not only in India, but even in Greater India

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1) *MBH*, III, 2, 111; see also III, 1, 26.
2) KEITH, HSL, p. 43; DE, HSL, pp. 51-52.
3) For a list of Kṛṣṇa dramas see KONOW, ID, pp. 99-102; DE, HSL, pp. 467-469. There are several devotional plays on Kṛṣṇa-Bhakti, produced in the middle of the 16th century A.D. Mention may be made of *Lalita-mādhava*, *Vidagdha-mādhava*, *Dāna-Kelikaumudi* and *Jagannatha-vallabha*.
4) *Raghuvaṃśa*, I, 4.
5) *Uttararāmacarita*, I, 1: *'idaṃ kavibhyaḥ pūrvebhyo namovākaṃ praśāsmahe'*.
6) *Anargharāghava*, prologue, *'Murārināmadheyasya bāla-Vālmīkeḥ'*, etc.
7) *Bālabhārata*, 1, 12.

where Buddhists and South Indian merchants carried the Indian lore in the distant past [1]. Even after the general decline in the Sanskrit literature, the interest in legends and the recitations of epics did not die. It inspired the lyrics of JAYADEVA in Bengal, which is claimed to be the best representative of a refined form of the popular *Yātrā* performances of Bengal [2]. That these *Yātrās* were a popular mode of performance, is amply supported by their continuance even to this day [3]. In the North several versions of Rāma's legend were staged in Rāmalīlās. The story was put both in the form of dumb show as well as in a crude dramatic way and the characters, even to this day, are impersonated by young boys in the Rāma-Līlā festivals. In the dumb shows, no dialogue is introduced as the story is well known in all circles both high and low.

It is true that the interest in these epic tales continued in all ages, but this free borrowing of themes by poets set a precedent which proved fatal to the growth of drama. Poets and dramatists picked up the same episodes and characters one after another and finally reduced them to mere types. In fact, the dramatist ignored the dramatic element and only aimed at typifying morals. As the dramas were seldom put on the stage, the dramatist missed the opportunity of being cheered or jeered which could indicate the merits of his composition. Even a mediocre play passed under the name of drama, which could only have been enjoyed by an exclusive clientèle of cultured people.

One wonders what prevented the poets and dramatists from being faithful to contemporary life and their surroundings. Never in the long history of his literary activities does the poet exhibit keenness in picking up themes from his surroundings, which must have been quite colourful and glorious. The political upheavals and convulsions capable of tremendous impact, failed to stir and churn the emotions of creative genius, who sought solace in ideals alone. True, that poets and dramatists are born and not made, but they might have demonstrated their resentment against a fixed order, which on one hand would have had a salutary effect on the authori-

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1) BOWERS, *Theatre in the East*, pp. 14-15; CHABRA, in IAC, Jan. 1956, pp. 306-07.

2) J. L. KLEIN, *Geschichte des Dramas*, III. Leipzig, p. 51; see also LASSEN, *Indische Alterthumskunde*, II, Leipzig, pp. 504-5, P. GUHA THAKURTA, *The Bengali Drama*, (London) 1930, p. 4.

3) GUHA-THAKURTA,, *The Bengali Drama*, p. 1.

ties and on the other would have paved the way for introducing new themes. But as observed earlier, these slavish tendencies influenced the poets because of the learned character of the Sanskrit language and literature, which far from being the people's forte, flourished in refined and cultured circles alone.

Only a few themes in *Prakaraṇas* and minor forms of dramas seem to have been borrowed from a collection of stories such as the Bṛhatkathā of GUṆĀḌHYA and other sources [1]. The Bṛhatkathā is beset with problems of date and authorship admitting divergence in views. However, it is quite probable that the Udayana stories and a few plots in Prakaraṇas were borrowed from the earlier version of the Bṛhatkathā, which later disappeared from the Indian scene, but the existence of which is attested by SUBANDHU, BĀṆA, DAṆḌIN and many others [2]. Even a Cambodian inscription [3] of 875 A.D. refers to the name of GUṆĀḌHYA. As our knowledge of its contents is extremely limited, it is not known to what extent the early Sanskrit dramatist BHĀSA was indebted to GUṆĀḌHYA. The three surviving versions of the Bṛhatkathā affirm that the original must have been in *Śloka* form, while DAṆḌIN's description points to a *Kathā* form in prose. If reliance is to be placed on tradition, the book was composed in Paiśācī Prākrit, which testifies to a probability of prose text.

Judging from its vast compass as recorded in traditions, GUṆĀḌHYA must have been also indebted to the Rāmāyaṇa, Mahābhārata, Buddhist tales, popular legends of seafaring people and current stories like that of Udayana. But it is doubtful if he could make full use of the epic tales, because GUṆĀḌHYA was not a *protégé* of kings, but of merchants and traders, seafarers, and dashing heroes of love adventures. It was a bourgeois epic not attached to stainless characters like that of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, but must have collected spirited accounts of romantic heroes, who believed in the tempests of life. They had the steam and energy to travel to the four corners of the world in quest of gold metal

[1]) The *Svapnavāsavadattā*, *Pratijñājaugandharāyaṇa* of BHĀSA, *Mṛcchakaṭika* of ŚŪDRAKA, *Mālavikāgnimitra* of KĀLIDĀSA, two *Nāṭikās* of HARṢA and *Mālatīmādhava* of BHAVABHŪTI appear to have borrowed themes from *Bṛhatkathā*.

[2]) KEITH, HSL, pp. 266-67; DE, HSL, 694.

[3]) KEITH, HSL, p. 266.

and also the gold in the feminine bodies. It is suggested [1]) that BHĀSA's Yaugandharāyaṇa and ŚŪDRAKA's Vasantasenā are borrowed from the Bṛhatkathā [2]). KEITH feels that the descriptions of courtyards and halls of Vasantasenā correspond with Kaliṅgasenā's mansions, as found in the Bṛhatkathā Ślokasaṃgraha. As in theme, purpose, atmosphere and spirit the Bṛhatkathā differed much from the epics, the poets accustomed to epic influence could not make much use of these popular legends. No wonder that, as most of the stories were steeped in non-Aryan traditions and were written in Paiśācī or Bhūtabhāṣā, the poets preferred to remain in the safe waters of the epics.

2. IDENTICAL AIMS FOR DRAMA AND KĀVYA

The dramatic theory aims at evoking a permanent sentiment in the mind ot the spectator by means of a dramatic performance. As far as this aspect of theory is concerned drama and poetry have the same functions. As in Kāvya so in drama the dominant emotion persists throughout and the aim of the poet is to create effect through the aid of transitory feelings. Since a dramatic performance is an imitation or a representation of situations drawn from the mundane world [3]), the situations accompanied by gestures, action, dress, speech are so tinged with emotion that they evoke pain or pleasure. The only distinguishing feature is the external paraphernalia which in the case of drama is a source of delight to the eyes. It is because of this visual aspect and the imposition of roles on the actors that the drama or *Rūpaka* has been treated as a separate branch of literature. The dance and mimetic art when united with song and dialogues are contributory to drama, but neither of the two attains the perfection of evoking sentiments in the heart of the spectator [4]). Therefore, the theory recognises the paramount importance of Poetry in the *Rūpakas* and rates the *Uparūpakas* as of secondary importance, in which the poetic element need not be a dominating feature [5]). In other

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1) *Ibid.*, p. 271.
2) *Ibid.*, p. 271.
3) NS K.M., I, 78; XIX, 116; DR, 1, 7.
'avasthā yā hi lokasya sukhaduḥkhasamudbhavā
nānāpuruṣasaṃcārā nāṭake sābhidhīyate' (NS, XIX, 116).
4) DE, HSL, pp. 66-67; NS K.M., XVIII, 9-12.
5) NS K.M., XVIII, 106; DE, HSL, p. 66. Note that BHARATA does not deal with all the uparūpakas except Nāṭikā.

words, the theorists subordinated the dramatic element to the poetic and laid the foundation of drama on an insecure basis. Owing to the impact of theories and his own inbred disposition, the dramatist, who in most cases was a poet himself, could not extricate the drama from this compromising position. One of the direct and fatal effects of this tendency is seen in literature now extant where instead of having poetry in drama we have drama in poetry [1]. In these extant plays there is more of poetry than dramatic element because the dramatist received recognition in proportion to his poetic achievements. It is doubtful if he received any recognition on the basis of dramatic excellences alone.

Despite these and other limitations the earlier dramatists like BHĀSA, KĀLIDĀSA and ŚŪDRAKA succeeded in creating and sustaining some dramatic effect, because of their extraordinary genius and master minds. They introduced vigour, variety and human pathos in natural colours and with the utmost poetic skill so as not to mar the effect of their poetical plays. But their successors, incapable of maintaining balance between drama and real life, lost the way and tended more towards extravagance and elegancies of style. These tendencies never permitted the dramatist to maintain a distinction between the real and the artificial. The poet could never turn away his mind from the artificial court atmosphere where applause was showered on the basis of poetic grace and imaginative skill. Instead of producing a drama full of action, the dramatist produced literary masterpieces within the framework of dramatic traditions.

Unlike the Greek dramatists the Sanskrit poet never cared for popular taste, or else he never tasted the thrill of popular admiration. Driven by circumstances and his own disposition, he produced a highly cultivated literary drama with an eye to seek recognition of the learned, the *'Sahṛdaya'*, who dominated court life. In the course of years poetics, erotics, and dramaturgy conventionalized tastes and habits demanding more of grace and artificiality from the dramatist and the poet. In this atmosphere the dramatist lost his hold on the display of true passion and faithfulness to the forces of realism.

Thus, from its very inception the Sanskrit drama was bred in

[1]) DE, HSL, p. 441.

the fanciful atmosphere of sentiments and poetry, which overshadowed the vital features of action and characterization. Out of unshakable respect for texts and traditions and because of indifference to the realities of life, the poets failed to keep the running waters fresh. As the 'ritual' element in drama and poetry tended more towards traditionalism, it prevented poets from introducing new motives and themes and thus contributed to the petrification of *kāvya* in general and drama in particular. But this does not mean that the Hindu drama is bereft of sublime situations and pathos. There are scores of passages and descriptions which would create a state of catharsis in any aesthetic heart. KĀLIDĀSA's masterly description of Śakuntalā bidding farewell to the fauna and flora, ŚŪDRAKA's picture of poverty tormenting Cārudatta, Sītā's ordeals in exile by BHAVABHŪTI and VIŚĀKHADATTA's depiction of the struggle in the heart of Rākṣasa, are some of the instances which will always be remembered when portrayed feelingly on the stage.

3. Absence of Music and Songs

Very often it is argued, and not without justification, that despite BHARATA's assurance of borrowing elements of music from the Sāmaveda [1]) and his elaborate treatment of the art in unison with dance, there is very little music in Sanskrit drama. There is no dearth of references in the Vedic literature testifying to the existence of music, both vocal and instrumental [2]), but how long and to what extent music was allowed to be a popular art, is not known. It is possible that the Vedic chants or the sacred music only thrived in Brāhmaṇical circles. The folk or popular music being practised by the professionals, who were in all probability mostly non-Aryans, may have been taboo. Therefore, the dramatist was not keen to compose songs of his own, but depended on the resourcefulness of the Sūtradhāra, who, with the aid of singers and musicians under his command, could conveniently insert some pieces here and there.

The importance of music as a means of recreation cannot be underestimated. But the fact that BHARATA [3]) commends the use

[1]) NS K.M., I, 17.
[2]) H. A. POPLEY, *The Music of India*, Calcutta (1950), pp. 8-9.
[3]) *Sāh. D.*, VI, 270, 307.

of music only in dramas of secondary importance, like *Nāṭi*, *Hallīśa*, *Bhāṇika*, and others, signifies that music was not considered an essential factor of Sanskrit drama. Accordingly the types enumerated have no representatives in the surviving plays [1]. Most of the types suggested only to bear the character of pantomimes accompanied with songs, dance and music rather than possessing any serious drama in themselves. It proves that the use of music in first-rate dramas was definitely restricted, if not taboo. To quote an instance, KĀLIDĀSA who introduced one song of 4 pādas in Mālavikāgnimitra [2] and Śakuntalā [3] each, enumerates in Kumārasambhava [4] various forms of musical pieces demonstrated at the nuptial ceremony of Śiva and Pārvatī. Similar references are found in Raghuvaṃśa [5]. But in all his dramas excepting in Vikramorvaśī, there is hardly any music. MURĀRI and RĀJAŚEKHARA have introduced *dhruvā* in their dramas, which is a very late development though the variety has been discussed at length by BHARATA. There can be two reasons for such an omission. Firstly, tradition compelled the poet to aim at poetic excellence alone and the patrons felt thrilled at the lyrical beauty of the stanzas, therefore he took no notice of music. Another probable reason was that since singing required professional skill and the professionals were possibly not of acceptable rank, therefore, inspite of the sanction of Śāstra, no musical pieces could be introduced. In Sanskrit drama there is nothing corresponding to the Greek Chorus, because the Greeks never catered for masses who had their own modes of enjoyments for which no hall or elaborate stage was necessary.

It is strange that even at a comparatively late period when music formed an accepted social enjoyment as commended by VĀTSYĀYANA, and the adherents of the Kṛṣṇa cult recognised the charm of the lute, the Sanskrit dramatist remained firm in boycotting music. In mediaeval times when the devotional songs of JAYADEVA thrilled the listeners with exquisite joy, the Sanskrit dramatist remained firm and loyal to the traditions set by early poets. It is amazing that ŚŪDRAKA, who is credited to have deviated

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1) KEITH, SD, p. 351.
2) *Māl.*, II, 4.
3) *Śak.*, V, 1.
4) *Kumārasambhava*, VII, 91 and XI, 36; LÉVI, TI, p. 18 f.
5) *Raghuvaṃśa*, III, 19. Cf. also Bh. S. UPADHYĀYA, *India in Kālidāsa*, Allahabad (1947), p. 225 ff.

from the beaten track and who could obviously have permitted his heroine to burst into a song or two, is totally indifferent to the appeal of this fine art. He introduced a song in the background sung by Rebhila, a low character, and makes the hero acknowledge the charms of music and lute [1]). Further, when the Vidūṣaka crosses the fourth floor of Vasantasenā's mansion in act IV of Mṛcchakaṭika, he perceives hundreds of musical instruments and several girls are depicted engrossed in practice, but in his drama proper ŚŪDRAKA too followed the tradition. Another cogent reason which explains the absence of music, is the over-emphasis placed on poetry. The dramatist thought it beneath his dignity to compose music when he could compose poetry, the highest of fine arts. The same holds good in the case of dancing which in spite of BHARATA'S clear recommendations, rarely finds expression on the stage.

Whatever may be the reasons behind this traditional indifference, the fact remains that in Sanskrit drama there is no occasion either for collective singing or full-throated melodies, which in cases of imitation of real life or a genuine situation, should have been regarded as an integral part of our existence and might have heightened the dramatic effect.

4. ABUNDANCE OF VERSES

Since drama flourished as a sub-division of *Kāvya*, it encouraged the poets to strive after the sentimental and poetic and neglect prose to the utmost. KĀLIDĀSA and ŚŪDRAKA were capable of vivifying prose with their creative talents, but to achieve elegance in poetry, they hankered after metrical skill, for it afforded scope for sentimental expressions. As the drama suffered from its close dependence on epics mainly in verses, the dramatist strove hard to stuff his composition with lyrical descriptive stanzas of various metres, though the results were often disproportionate [2]). The drama started with a verse, ended in a verse and whatever was considered important was put in verse form. No doubt tradition always set a high value on verses as even texts on grammar, medicine, philology, were all versified and the moral of the tales and fables was again retained in the verse form. However the total

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1) *Mṛccha.*, III, 4-5.
2) DE, HSL, p. 58.

effect was that prose, which is universally regarded as the most convenient and best form of dialogue, was in dramas reduced to secondary importance [1], supplying only connecting links; and the preponderant employment of verses drifted it away from the real drama. This tendency of adhering closely to the epic in form and spirit prevented the poets from polishing and stabilizing their prose, which accounted for the loss of vigour and appeal. It was the dramatist who could set a tradition of acquiring skill in prose and thereby could have contributed to solving one of the major problems of Sanskrit literature.

In close proximity to descriptions of autumn, spring and the rainy season introduced into the Rāmāyaṇa by VĀLMĪKI the dramatist, in order to heighten the sentimental effect, inserted descriptions of natural scenes, which more often were not suited to the stage beyond their poetic value. In Vikramorvaśī [2], the poet leaves the hero in a forest grove full of the traditional natural fauna, storks, Cātakas, peacocks, cuckoos, swans, bees, creepers, etc. The lover-king in search of his lost beloved bores the audience with loud wailings and the poet produces verse after verse, invoking the aid of bounteous nature. ŚŪDRAKA, who otherwise has the makings of a first-rate dramatist, loses his head at the sight of clouds and puts stanza after stanza into the mouth of the heroine, heralding the advent of the rainy season [3]. In the first place these scenes in the Sanskrit drama are difficult to stage even in modern times when stage-craft has progressed considerably. Besides their inclusion beyond proportion interrupts the dramatic effect and undermines it considerably.

Enamoured of his poetic skill, the dramatist showed no hesitation in offering solutions of serious problems relating to life and death [4]. In such frenzied moments he forgets all about the characters and their individuality, reducing hero and heroine to set types. This tendency, to some extent, is also seen in the Greek, Roman and European comedies. As to whether these stanzas were appreciated by the audience we have no clue. Sanskrit literature unlike that of Greece, does not record the echo of criticism directed against its poets as was done in Greece against EURIPIDES.

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[1] VARADACHARI, HSL, p. 134.
[2] *Vikramorvaśī*, Act IV.
[3] *Mṛccha.*, Act V.
[4] KEITH, SD, p. 282.

It was mainly due to the epic influence that the poet from the very beginning recognised metre as an essential element in the drama. In Greek drama the verses of the chorus were to interrupt the action with comments, the expression of sentiments, admonitions and contemplations, and to aid the dialogues but in Sanskrit they served the purpose of literary excursions [1]. It would be interesting to note the number of verses employed in some of the more famous plays, which gives an insight into the mounting interest the poets displayed in composing stanzas. Since AŚVAGHOṢA's dramas are in a fragmentary condition, no definite deduction is possible. ŚŪDRAKA's Mṛcchakaṭika has approximately 380 stanzas, KĀLIDĀSA's Śakuntalā has 195, Vikramorvaśī, minus songs, has only 135 verses, BHAVABHŪTI's Uttararāmacarita has 255, VIŚĀKHADATTA's Mudrārākṣasa has 170, Venisaṃhāra has 208. The figure mounts to 650 in Mahānāṭaka and RĀJAŚEKHARA's Bālarāmāyaṇa has 741 ślokas. The allegorical play Prabodhacandrodaya in 6 acts has 191 verses only. It is a case of progressive degeneration as is clear from the increasing number of verses. Thus, from the beginning a defect had crept in the domain of drama which encouraged the poet to be more and more artificial.

5. SUPERNATURAL ELEMENT IN DRAMA

According to BHARATA's preamble in the Nāṭyaśāstra, the drama was intended to provide relaxation even to those who had no access to the Vedas [2]; but it could not shake off the Brāhmaṇical influence which it glorified in all its aspects. It would be unfair to judge Indian sentiments with a western mind and principles, for which mythology has no such fettering influence as in India. In the silver age of the epics man and the gods, heaven and earth did not constitute a fixed division but were complementary to each other. Therefore, the themes borrowed from the epics brought along with them such elements, which to the modern mind may appear incongruous, but which certainly thrilled the early settlers.

As the first drama was, according to BHARATA, enacted in heaven with the aid of heavenly damsels and in the presence of heavenly luminaries, mortals were left with no other choice than

[1] KEITH, SD, p. 90, 279 n. 2.
[2] NS K.M., I. 12.

to imitate the same. So the characters selected later were of virtuous disposition and prowess equal to the gods. Most of the mythical heroes had not only access to the gates of heaven, but, like powerful allies, they always ran to the aid of the gods in times of emergency and were amply rewarded for their loyalty and godliness. When the Sanskrit dramatist made use of such distinguished and lofty themes, unconscious of the effects he felt impelled to introduce the supernatural element as freely it pleased him. As declared by Kṛṣṇa in the Bhagavadgītā [1]), only ideal and eminent persons should be cast in dignified roles, because the common people always follow the ideals blindly. Therefore the poets, steeped as they were in the Brāhmaṇical traditions, shifted the scene from earth to heaven and from men to gods and goddesses. They further exhibited the illimitable power of sages by introducing episodes of curses and boons, which always over-awed the religious and pious.

In his full-length drama AŚVAGHOṢA has not revealed the identity of the place where Buddha received the two disciples, which might be in heaven. Though opposed to Brāhmaṇical religion, in his two Kāvyas he takes the Enlightened One to heaven, the city of Kubera. BHĀSA's characters move freely from heaven to earth as if there were no barriers. KĀLIDĀSA in Śakuntalā introduces the ever-fiery Sage Durvāsā who is over-fond of pronouncing curses on the innocent. Further the ascetic girl is kidnapped by a dazzling heavenly nymph, Duśyanta visits the heavenly regions as a friend of Indra and the latter's charioteer alights in the royal garden unannounced and unheralded. In Vikramorvaśī, the entire course of events is shifted alternately between heaven and earth as a result of curses and boons. ŚŪDRAKA and VIŚĀKHADATTA deserve all credit for avoiding the supernatural in plays where the episode, and the events, and the characters, all belong to this world. But BHAVABHŪTI, MURĀRI and RĀJAŚEKHARA all introduce the supernatural element in their plays.

One obvious drawback of the practice is that the reader or spectator loses human interest in the hero and heroine, as soon as he is reminded of their exalted position. It is easy and natural to sympathize with Vasantasenā and Cārudatta, who are drawn from

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[1]) *Bhagavadgītā*, III, 21:
'yad yad ācarati śreṣṭhaḥ tat tad evetaro janaḥ
sa yat pramāṇaṃ kurute lokas tad anuvartate'.

the world known to us. Even Śakuntalā compels attention for some time till she is forcibly carried away to the celestial abode of her mother. But despite a masterly characterization and emotional treatment by BHAVABHŪTI, it is difficult to commiserate Sītā, when the poet reminds us of her being a goddess and residing with divinities [1]. Mortals are accustomed to seek the favour of gods and invoke them in the hour of need, but it would be difficult to identify them as one of us. Thus, stuffed with the supernatural element drama no longer remains a page torn from the universal chapter of the book of life. It assumes a scriptural role as if produced with set moralistic purposes, which form an end by themselves.

6. ABSENCE OF PEOPLE'S STAGE AND THEATRE.

One is amazed at the completeness with which BHARATA treats the subject of dramaturgy in all its aspects. But very often the subject matter becomes diffused and obscured by minute details, though it is doubtful if the facts analysed are at all related to the actual state of affairs [2]. He established a tradition adopted by later writers in working out divisions and sub-divisions in an arbitrary fashion. In the Nāṭyaśāstra BHARATA [3] suggests nine types of theatres with minor differences in their construction, but none of the types is supported by any cogent evidence. The terms used for theatres are *Nāṭyagṛha*, *Nāṭyamaṇḍapa*, *Prekṣāgṛha*, *Prekṣāgāra*, which find mention in treatises on dramaturgy as well as in extant literature [4]. While there are occasional references to music and dancing halls, art-galleries and theatres attached to royal palaces, there is hardly any reference to a people's stage corresponding to the Greek Theatre, which could have accomodated a large number of spectators from the general public. There is no doubt that the princes maintained such play-houses where only the learned assembled. Even courtesans like VASANTASENĀ and Mālatī of Kuṭṭanīmatam, possessed miniature halls where they could entertain the visitors [5]. In the prologues of various dramas,

[1]) See also KEITH, SD, p. 282.
[2]) GHOSH, NS, Introduction, pp. LXXIV-LXXV.
[3]) NS K.M., II, 8-9.
[4]) D. R. MANKAD, *The Ancient Indian Theatre*, Vallabhanagar, Anand (1950), pp. 1-3.
[5]) *Mṛccha.*, Act IV; *Kuṭṭanīmatam*, K.M., 852-860, p. 104.

only the assembly of the learned and cultured is admired, but nowhere have the poets left any description of plebeians enjoying a play in some spacious hall. There is no direct or even indirect allusion to the existence of a popular stage, but it would be inconceivable that the masses had no performances of their own. But as Sanskrit drama was primarily composed for the learned, and never for the popular taste, this cultural gap positively deprived it of the thrills of a popular stage.

It is suggested that dramatic performances for the common folk were usually held in *Nāṭyamandiras* and an improvised stage outside the temple was constructed for the purpose. Mr. GUPTA supports this view independently quoting the illustration of Mahānāṭaka [1], which could be staged only in the open air. It is possible that in the later period when Sanskrit drama had entered a decadent age, a temporary stage may have been improvised for opera-like shows, which were more of quasi-dramatic performances [2]. For Mahānāṭaka of DĀMODARA MIŚRA is no drama in a strict sense: it is written in verse form with a negligible amount of prose and at best can be compared to the Gītagovinda of JAYADEVA, which is the best representative of the Yātrā performances of Bengal. But the Mahānāṭaka and Gītagovinda are of very late date, supplying no material information in determining the existence of people's theatre in India in the early stages. The Mahānāṭaka is decidedly a hotch-potch adaptation of BHAVABHŪTI, MURĀRI, RĀJAŚEKHARA and even JAYADEVA and merits no consideration as an independent play [3]. It is possible that even Vikramorvaśī, with its elaborate shifting scenes and unusual emphasis on music, dance and songs, may have served the purpose of an opera-like performance [4].

It is an admitted fact that Sanskrit drama from its early appearance remained an approved and pet diversion of merely aristocratic circles. As it aimed at evoking sentiment in the hearts of the *Sahṛdaya* (aesthetically advanced), which could only be achieved by constant association and sustained study or through an here-

[1] GUPTA, IT, p. 34.
[2] KEITH, SD, pp. 272-73.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 271.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 338.

ditary gift, no commoner could be expected to derive joy from it [1]. It was normally performed on special occasions when troupes of professionals could be engaged by influential persons alone. To the cultured audience who admired perfect treatment of sentiment, minor omissions were of no serious consequence. Should the performances have been open to the general population, there would have been more of drama than literary excursions. Had the theatre been more popular, the tendency to reject reality and simplicity and to strive for artificial excursions would have been counteracted [2], the language would have been more chiselled and also made simple, characters would have been lively, artificial poetry would have been less and the cleavage between drama and life would have been narrowed down. From the beginning to the end the playwright got into a habit of basking in the sunshine of royal patronage and at no time exhibited any eagerness to come down from that exalted pedestal.

It is suggested [3] that most of the famous temples in ancient India had their *Nāṭyamandiras*, where dancers and actors propitiated gods and goddesses through representation of their arts. But there are no clear proofs if such performances were practised in any part of Aryan India, except in the South where Aryan traditions became bogged. The *Yātrās* as they do exist in Bengal and *Rāmalīlā* or *Rāsalīlā* in the North are quite a late chapter in the evolution of folk performances. The suggestion [4] that the description of the theatre recorded in Śilparatna pertains to those theatres attached to royal palaces, while BHARATA describes only those which were used for common people, lacks support. None of the authors has drawn this distinction so far. The descriptions in Viṣṇudharmottara (3.20.4) and Saṅgītaratnākara (1351.61) all correspond to BHARATA. Perhaps some type of native traditions existed in these regions which could not come to the fore owing to priestly disapproval. Devadāsīs, as discussed earlier, were mainly a South Indian tradition. These paid or dedicated girls had to pay

[1] *Sāh. D.*, II, 38. Also a popular verse ascribed to DHARMADATTA:
'savāsanānāṃ sabhyānāṃ rasasyāsvādanaṃ bhavet
nirvāsanās tu raṅgāntaḥ kāṣṭha-kudyāśma-sannibhāḥ'.

[2] DE, HSL, p. 442.

[3] GUPTA, IT, pp. 26-29; DAŚARATHA OJHA, BNS, p. 70.

[4] MANKAD, AIT, pp. 3-4.

a heavy price for this role, which must have been a deterring factor for others to popularise the arts.

As for the suggestion of a cave theatre in the Jogimara cave-temple of Ramgarh hills, the point is highly controversial and lacks positive proof. BLOCH's [1] conclusion of identifying the stairs with improvised seats is challenged both by BEGLER and BURGESS [2]. The latter emphatically objects to the cave having been used as a stage at any time, since it has a limited capacity. In fact most scholars are tempted to seek a theatre in this cave because BHARATA recommends that the theatre hall should be constructed cave-like [3]. The description is supported by DAṆḌIN in Daśakumāra-caritam [4]. That BHARATA favoured a cave-like construction for better acoustic effects, is proved by the remarks of ABHINAVA GUPTA [5] in his commentary, which clearly stresses the advantage of '*anuraṇana*', the resounding, which was helpful in diffusing the sound to the four corners of the hall. By recommending a cave-shaped hall BHARATA emphasised the necessity of constructing a compact hall, where the acoustics would be satisfactory. In the absence of modern appliances, of amplifiers, the actors had to strain their voice, often losing their grace and charm.

S. C. GHOSHAL and HALDAR who examined the spot maintain that there is no convincing proof of the cave ever having been used as a theatre [6]. Probably the cave was used as residence and at times music, dancing and singing were arranged on a small scale for a private limited audience. BURGESS [7] strongly asserts that if the cave was ever intended to be a theatre hall, more instances of the type should have been available. No doubt there are occasional references to 'cave dwellings' in the ancient literature [8] still extant and facilities for cultural activities were available at the caves of Aurangabad, Nasik and other places, but a dwelling is different from a hall. At the most it can be inferred that the Jogimara caves were frequented by ascetics and artistes for modest

[1] J. BLOCH, Archaeological Survey of India Report, 1903-4, p. 123.
[2] FERGUSSON and BURGESS, Arch. Survey Western India, Vol. IV, plates VII-X; Vol. III, Plate V.
[3] NS K.M., II, 69: '*kāryaḥ śailaguhākāro dvibhūmir nāṭyamaṇḍapaḥ*'.
[4] *Daśakumāracarita*, (PETERSON) Bombay edition, X, 20.
[5] *Abhinavabhāratī*, GOS, Ch. 54.
[6] A. C. BIDYABHUSANA, *Dance Theatre at Ramgarh*, TOH, pp. 220-21.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 221.
[8] *Kumārasambhava*, I, 10 and 14; also *Meghadūta*, I, 26.

excursions. That the cave was used for dance and music is proved by the inscription describing that an artiste, (*Rūpadakṣa*) Devadatta by name, loved a slender-waisted Devadāsī by name of Sutanukā[1]. However, it is impossible to think of a cave-theatre in the remotest part of Chota Nagpur, when there are no remnants of the institution in other parts of India noted for dance-drama traditions. If it did exist, it would serve as an additional proof in favour of dance-drama traditions in the Dravidian regions which were frequented by non-Aryan artistes.

7. Palace Patronage

One of the reasons responsable for maintaining distance between the people and the poets, was the royal patronage extended to the dramatists, basking in which the poets never cared to make a hero out of a common man. From Bhāsa to Bhavabhūti and even at a much later period the poets were either recipients of kingly favours or they belonged to royalty, which prevented them from being realistic in approach and treatment. The Śāstra always commended this dependence of poets and regarded it as hallmark of brilliance. Bhāsa was a *protégé* of Rājasiṁha, Aśvaghoṣa of Kaniṣka, Kālidāsa of Vikramāditya, another Kālidāsa was court-poet of Bhoja, Śūdraka and Harṣa were themselves kings and Bhavabhūti according to Kalhaṇa was a member of king Yaśovarman's entourage[2]. Viśākhadatta or Viśākhadeva was a prince and son of Mahārāja Bhāskaradatta and Bhaṭṭanārāyaṇa, according to a tradition preserved in the Tagore family, was a *protégé* of Ādiśūra, king of Bengal[3]. Bred and brought up in a strictly court atmosphere, their vision became restricted and their range of subjects was stunted. The theorists commended the royal patronage as it yielded money and fame[4]. For a dramatist the favour of a king was the supreme object as he could not think of having a premier of his play elsewhere. On the other hand the kings were always willing to allow their names to

[1] For text see Lüders, *Buddhistische Dramen*, p. 41.
[2] *Rājataraṅgiṇī*, II, 144.
[3] Keith, SD, p. 204.
[4] *Kāvyaprakāśa*, I, 1: *'kāvyaṃ yaśase 'rthakṛte vyavahāravide śivetarakṣataye'*. In the exposition of the above definition Mammaṭa alludes to the fact of Dhāvaka acquiring wealth from Śrīharṣa.

be associated with literary compositions [1]. This mutual admiration was considered ideal and made the two inter-dependent as recorded in an anthological verse:

kavinā ca vibhur vibhunā ca kaviḥ
kavinā vibhunā ca vibhāti sadaḥ.

'Patron by the company of poet and the latter in company of patron prosper, while the assembly thrives with the union of both'. This way of life was also approved by the Kāmaśāstra [2], which was a subject of study for all poets and dramatists. Since the poets were expected to be familiar with details of kingly life in harem and court, the latter demanded entertainment with refinement, diversions with dignity [3]. The poet had to make use of stock descriptions of amusements in the court, harem, water-sports, music, dance, pantomime and others, pursued by princes in leisure hours, for which a study of the Kāmaśāstra was indispensable. With this objective in mind, VĀTSYĀYANA commended the company of hetaeras, well versed in fine arts and also in the art of love making.

At the time of the performance of a play, the king or patron presided over the function, sitting on a royal throne around which the retainers and courtiers gathered according to rank and position. Saṅgītaratnākara [4] and Kāvyamīmāṃsā [5] furnish all the details of decorum and protocol observed in such assemblies. From the description in Kāvyamīmāṃsā it is clear that there was actually no room for the general public. However, it is probable that members of twice-born communities could see a religious playlet at the temples. In accordance with general practice the barbarians, the ignorant and low-born were not admitted to these functions. RĀJAŚEKHARA [6], however, admits all types of actors, singers, bards, parasites, hetaeras, prostitutes and others, since they formed the entourage of the king.

This practice of thriving on royal favours brought refinement and decorum, but tended more and more towards artificiality and

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1) KEITH, SD., p. 286.
2) *Kāmasūtra*, I, 4, 14-20; also see KEITH, HSL, pp. 51-53.
3) KEITH, SD, p. 285.
4) *Saṅgīta Ratnākara*, VII, 1340-48, pp. 395-96.
5) *Kāvyamīmāṃsā*, GOS, X, pp. 54-55.
6) *Ibid.*, p. 55.

unreality. Plagued by this atmosphere BHĀSĀ [1]) grumbled seeing the plays confined to the four walls of the palace. In such an atmosphere only master minds could strike a balance by remaining faithful to human values and keeping an observant eye on the characters, otherwise most of the dramatists turned pedantic and pompous, as these traits more often pleased the gracious patrons.

8. THE AUDIENCE

Asian civilization does not afford the amateur those opportunities of self-expression, which are readily available to them in Europe and America. The arts in ancient India were not taught as social accomplishments. On one hand there were professionals, proficient in the traditional art, and on the other was the lay public [2]). At no time did tradition allow everybody and anybody the right to sit in judgement except the appreciative and respectful. In the same way BHARATA [3]) expected that the ideal spectator must possess a keen sense of judgement and understanding of human emotions. The arts flourished only under cultivated patronage and in its own particular environment. Thus, in prologues of various dramas this quality of the spectators is usually extolled by the poets, which flattered the audience and ultimately encouraged them to pronounce judgement in their favour. Even a poet of KĀLIDĀSA's stature had to humour the assembly of the learned in most flattering tones [4]). Since courtly atmosphere invariably breeds jealousy and intrigues, this verdict of the learned assembly often helped the poet in silencing his adversaries.

Tradition in India always distinguished between the worthy and layman, known as Supātra and Kupātra. Before accepting a child as his disciple the Guru used his discretion in the light of the above and the high-born was invariably regarded as Supātra. In fact a layman is not capable of appreciating a fine piece of art which requires a cultivated taste. As CROCE [5]) expressed it: "Picture, poetry and every work of art produces no effect save on souls prepared to receive the same". It is only the aesthetically advanced

1) *Pratimānāṭaka*, Act I, Sc. 2; see also JAGIRDAR, DSL, p. 157.
2) D. P. MUKERJI, *Indian Music*, Bombay (1945), p. 86.
3) NS K.M., XXVII, 51; LÉVI, TI, p. 62 f.
4) *Śak.*, I, 3.
5) Cited by COOMARASWAMY, *Hindu view of Art*, in Dance of Śiva, p. 35.

mind that can comprehend the significance and beauty of the creative art. Precisely as love is reality experienced by the lover, truth is reality as experienced by the philosopher, so beauty is reality experienced by the artist [1]).

It must be said to the credit of BHARATA that he was generous in defining the terms of reference of drama. The Nāṭyaśāstra according to him taught duty to those who are bent on doing duty, love to those who are eager for its fulfilment and chastises those who are ill-bred and unruly [2]). This gives diversion to kings, peace of mind to persons who are afflicted with sorrow, wealth to those who wish for it and brings composure to agitated minds. The above characteristics were beautifully summed up by KĀLIDĀSA, when he says:

Nāṭyaṃ bhinnarucer janasya bahudhāpy ekaṃ samārādhanam

'Drama is common entertainment for people of different tastes and attitudes'.

It is doubtful if the term *Nāṭyam* is used for drama in the context. The stanza recited by Gaṇadāsa, maestro in dance who calls it his '*Kulavidyā*'—the family lore—refers to dance alone. Therefore the allusion in favour of drama as made by GHOSH [3]) and others is not correct.

But there is a considerable difference between the theory and practice. Though BHARATA gave with his right hand, he took more away with his left hand by fettering the scope of drama through his injunctions and multifarious prescriptions. In order to be an imitation of actual happenings in life the drama required a freedom and wider compass, which were denied at all times. Under such circumstances the audience could hardly be expected to be fair and composed of unbiased critics. GHOSH [4]) is very generous in appreciating the audience as critics when he maintains: "Critics never forgot that the drama was basically a social amusement and as such depended a great deal for its success on the average spectator". But in the restrained and restricted atmosphere of palaces there was no possibility of a fair award from an average spectator, because

1) *Ibid.*, p. 42.
2) NS K.M., I, 75; GHOSH, NS, Introduction, p. XLVI.
3) GHOSH, in NS, Introduction, p. XLVII.
4) *Ibid.*, p. XLVIII.

an average person had no access to the palace precincts. It was more or less a command performance where everything revolved around the patron and his whim. If the king admired a play his courtiers and retainers had no choice other than to follow suit. If the general populace should have been taken into the poets' confidence, the dramatic traditions could have been far healthier and more commendable. But the fact remains that the Indian drama owed its best and worst features to one important fact, that it was, and continued to remain, a class-institution. It sacrificed much in accepting injunctions to please only the learned, cultured and chosen few [1]).

[1]) SHELDON CHENEY, *Theatre 3000 years ago*, New York (1952), p. 117.

CHAPTER NINE

CAUSES OF DECADENCE

Muslim Invasion

While accounting for the reasons that led to an early decay of Sanskrit drama, the Indian scholars, generally, have apportioned the blame between two external factors [1]. The first and foremost reason adduced is the development of the Indian languages which, affecting the growth of Sanskrit, is alleged to have shifted general interest from Sanskrit to the newly developed languages. Another factor, which is alleged to have dealt a fatal blow, was the arrival of Mohammedan invaders, who are said to have been deadly opposed to all dramatic performances, confining their general interest only to popular forms of music and dance. No doubt these two factors indirectly may have contributed to the premature death of the Sanskrit drama, but these alone cannot be regarded as responsible for the early decline of the drama. It met an early death because of certain inherent drawbacks which had an all round influence on arts and poetry long before the growth of vernaculars or even the arrival of foreign invaders. This was in no sense an isolated phenomenon connected with Muslim invasions. On the other hand, there is no dearth of instances to prove that the Muslim Imperial rulers from Akbar to Shah Jehan have shown great appreciation for the Sanskrit Literature [2]. Had there been a pronounced apathy about Sanskrit language and literature, how could Prince Dara Shikoh have studied Sanskrit and translated Upaniṣads, Yoga-Vāsiṣṭha and Gītā into Persian? How could Fayzee have dared to translate the Bhagavadgītā, Rāmāyaṇa and the story of Nala and Damayantī into the same language? Had the circumstances been unfavourable, Paṇḍitarāja JAGANNĀTHA spurning the offer of a Hindu Rājā would never have continued

1) RAGHAVAN, BNS, pp. 1-2; KEITH, SD, pp. 242-43.
2) J. B. CHAUDHURY, *Contributions of Muslims to Sanskrit Learning*, II, Calcutta (1954), pp. 82-88.

to remain at the Moghul court [1]). Abdur Rahim Khān-i-Khānan is another wellknown Sanskrit and Hindi poet who wielded great influence at the Moghul Durbar. Mr. CHAUDHURY[2]) and P. K. GODE[3]) have brought out a long list of Sanskrit poets, who flourished at, and were sometimes patronised by, the Moghul court. In fact, the Muslims had not to exert themselves much against any popular mode of drama as the germs of decay had set in long before the foreign invasions took place [4]). India had not developed that strong theatrical stage which could antagonise the foreign rulers as a menace in their process of consolidation. However, it often happens that people start taking notice of the last loud report, little realizing that if the institution were deep rooted, no storm or hurricane could have shaken it. As for instance idol-worship and some other religious beliefs in India, despite a pronounced antagonism of the Muslims, could not be destroyed even to this day.

That on the contrary the dramas and poems continued to be produced uninterruptedly even after Moghul rule in India, is evidenced by the overwhelming number of compositions belonging to the later middle ages. Therefore, the causes for decline did not lie so much in the external factors as in the internal ones, which had sapped the literature of its creative force. No doubt the dislocation of the traditional pattern of society may have affected life in general, but then Sanskrit drama or even poetry were least concerned with contemporary life. Therefore, it would be appropriate to assume that the Mohammedan occupation, combined with several other forces, may only have hastened the end. At least it did not save the drama from stagnation conditioned by causes which were inherent in this literature itself [5]). It is not possible to examine and enumerate all such causes here. However, an attempt will be made to concentrate on the main factors, most of which were not confined to a particular period or personality, but persisted throughout the history of the Sanskrit drama.

1) P. K. GODE, *Studies in Indian Literary History*, II, pp. 452-59; CHAUDHURI, *Contributions of Muslims to Sanskrit Learning*, II, pp. 84-85; V. A. RAMASWAMI SASTRI, *Jagannatha Pandita*, Annamalinagar (1952), pp. 11-28.

2) CHAUDHURY, *Contributions of Muslims to Sanskrit Learning* II, pp. 89-125. See also Vol. I of the above publication.

3) GODE, *Studies in Indian Literary History*, II, pp. 364-369, 435-446.

4) DE, HSL, p. 447.

5) *Ibid.*, p. 446.

Multiplication of Manuals and Lack of Boldness

It is an admitted fact that a true dramatist is born, not made. Since genius in all ages and stages does not know any boundaries other than its own, the poet and dramatist are not expected to conform to any set rules and traditions. But the most amazing feature of the Sanskrit poet is his abject surrender to the literary conventions and injunctions. In ancient India, *Śāstra* exercised great influence and the holy books threatened the rebels, if any, with dire consequences [1]). It is probable that before Bharata's appearance, the dramatist may have exercised a free hand, consistent with the requirement of his genius and general thinking, but after the formation of rules governing the plays and their compositions, none seems to have revolted against the system. Thus from Aśvaghoṣa to Bhavabhūti or even till its total decline the drama is composed on a set pattern, the deviations, if any, were the result of the brilliance of a poet, not an indication of boldness. Even a poet of Kālidāsa's stature betrays marvellous fidelity to the *Śāstra* [2]), which again is blindly followed by Śūdraka and others. The only exception, perhaps, is that of Bhāsa, whose identity is still the subject of a vexed controversy. It has been suggested [3]) that, perhaps, Bhāsa was guided by some different form of Nāṭyaśāstra which may have been fairly lenient. It is likely that an older recension of the present Nāṭyaśāstra may have been lacking in strict observance of the rules. However, the result was disastrous. Because of the denial of initiative and freedom the dramatist unwittingly lost the golden opportunity of enriching the literature by establishing original creative forms.

It would be foolish to underestimate the creative genius and literary skill of the Sanskrit poets, who were gifted with uncommon

1) NS K.M., I, 93; III, 87-92. *Bhagavadgītā*, XVI, 23-24:
'yaḥ śāstravidhim utsṛjya vartate kāmakārataḥ
na sa siddhim avāpnoti na sukhaṃ na parāṃ gatim.
tasmāc chāstraṃ pramāṇaṃ te kāryākāryavyavasthitau
jñātvā śāstravidhānoktaṃ karma kartum ihārhasi'.

See also Shilotri, IATC, IV, p. 57: "An Indian will undertake no activity, will form no decision that is contrary to *Śāstra*. *Śāstra* determined for each man the entire range of his actions from morning till night, from birth until death".

2) Keith, SD, p. 352.

3) Max Lindenau, *Bhāsa-Studien: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des altindischen Dramas*, Leipzig (1890), p. 36.

excellence and were capable masters of the human mind and their art. But being unfortunately victims of a set order they betray lack of originality and independence. No doubt, KĀLIDĀSA, while remaining within the prescribed framework of the treatises, introduced minor changes in his themes and plots so as to portray the characters effectively. But he never revolted against the current traditional structure. ŚŪDRAKA exercised freedom in choosing an uncommon theme and also an unusual cast, but his submissiveness to the canons is too obvious. Most notable of all these dramatists was VIŚĀKHADATTA, the author of the Mudrārākṣasa, who did not favour any erotic or heroic plot and showed preference for a political theme. Still, he too submitted to the codified rules of dramaturgy. This was a strange predicament. BHAVABHŪTI selected his theme from the much-recommended epic of Rāmāyaṇa, but he had to twist the facts in the name of dramatic justification by uniting Rāma and Sītā in the end.

An individual author may endeavour to establish a new form or may point out inconsistencies, but if he is a great man, it is to be expected that he would remould the evil condition prevailing [1]. By keeping silent or by turning away in contempt one does not improve conditions, but perpetuates the traditions. The masterminds, in addition to their composing brilliant pieces, are also expected to lay the foundations of novel and original forms faithful to contemporary life.

Is it possible that the poets dreaded the criticism on which their career depended? There may be some other instances like that of BHĀSA [2] and BHAVABHŪTI [3] who were subjected to a fiery criticism. But that again proves that the literature was not in the hands of the masters but pretenders. It is unthinkable that the poets and dramatists who should have supplied models to the authorities, should look to them for general guidance. The poets

[1]) NICOLL, *History of English Drama* IV, p. 60.

[2]) The following anthological verse referring to BHĀSA's ordeal is quoted by CHANDRADHARA GULERI, IA, XLII, 52 ff.:

'Bhāsanāṭakacakre 'pi kṣepaiḥ kṣipte parīkṣituṃ
svapnavāsavadattasya dāhako 'bhūn na pāvakaḥ'.

[3]) *Mālatīmādhava*, Prologue:

'ye nāma kecid iha naḥ prathayanty avajñāṃ
jānanti te kim api tān prati naiṣa yatnaḥ,
utpatsyate ca mama ko 'pi samānadharmā
kālo hy ayam anavadhir vipulā ca pṛthvī'.

and littérateurs in all times and all countries are subjected to healthy or ignoble criticism, but many of them have emerged triumphant by the courage of their convictions and the demonstration of superior skill. The thesis that self-respecting literary people are not expected to undergo the tortures of criticism, is of no consequence. Because that is not half so deterrent as to prevent a real dramatist from producing a good play [1].

There is no denying of the fact that the earliest writers on poetics and dramaturgy must have composed these manuals for the purpose of reference and general guidance. It is doubtful if BHARATA, like his predecessor PĀṆINI with regard to grammar, ever thought of fettering the drama with rules and the minutest possible details. It must have been the slavish submission of the poets which encouraged these Ācāryas to apply control strictly and completely. If there should have been a few serious cases of violations and deliberate indifference, the authorities would have been quick to take the necessary measures. But the trend of the literature proves that the manuals continued multiplying because these exercised a wide influence on the budding genius. It is amazing that instead of composing poems or dramas, or pursuing some other useful branch of literature, so many took to the facile occupation of writing manuals on poetics and rhetorics, which in course of time choked the channels of free development of literature. No doubt works like Nāṭyaśāstra, Kāvyaprakāśa, Daśarūpa, Sāhitya-darpaṇa, Kāvyādarśa, Saṅgītaratnākara and Rasagaṅgādhara and others are of rare merit and have contributed to the evolution of the science of poetics. But oppressed by their academic discussions and fiery criticism, the new writers must have felt discouraged in trying new experiments.

Observing the all-binding force of *Śāstra* one is led to believe that the submissiveness on the part of poets and dramatists was, more or less, in the nature of willing co-operation. The poets were only too glad to avail themselves of the directions because they too had formed an implicit faith in such an order where the aims and objects of all learning were fixed. The Brāhmaṇical leaders firmly believed in systematizing all branches of learning, social conduct and other spheres of life so as to define the provinces of

[1] NICOLL, *History of English Drama* IV, p. 62.

the Indian culture and of the Indian view of life. They had worked out some eternal principles of life towards which all learning and literature must converge. To be fair to them it can be said that the principles evolved were not mere inventions but deductions based on well-sustained study. The handbooks on dramaturgy were like other Śāstras an attempt to describe and fix an aspect of Indian life. The very structure of each branch of scientific and artistic endeavour, the structure and approach of drama, works of art, temple and image had to be in conformity with such rules so as to fit in with their general scheme of life. Any deviation from a scheme, structure, a tradition, a rule was thought to be unpardonable because it could render the institution worthless. However, these traditions, in which all the responsibilities and creative talents were called to contribute, were incontestably hierarchical and aristocratic. The dramatist conformed to these injunctions so as not to incur the blame of being faithless to tradition. Or rather it simply did not occur to him to deviate in any essential point and so be guilty of a sacrilege. However, whatever may have been the causes that led to the formulation of these handbooks and manuals, it is evident that they did infringe the freedom of the individual writer; the literature could not advance without the aid of the Śāstra.

In his history of Sanskrit poetics [1], Mr. KANE has appended a list of such authors and books, which according to him is not complete. He lists nearly 425 authors and as many as 375 books, which are either available or mentioned. Immediately after the revival of Sanskrit in the Gupta age, new modes and forms gradually came into being. The works of BHAṬṬI, BHĀRAVI, MĀGHA and many others are indicative of pedantic styles, unknown to KĀLIDĀSA. As drama had no separate existence of its own, the rules and forms affecting Kāvyas were also applied to dramas. In the course of time tradition acquired such a strong-hold and influence that a genuine poet could not attempt a play successfully unless he aimed at erudition. This unchecked and unrestrained flow of manuals proved too strong for the growth of drama and only helped in hastening the end, even before it was allowed to bloom in fullness. Call it loyal submission or total lack of initiative, no writer could

[1]) KANE, HSP, Appendix.

challenge the authority of *Śāstra*. For generation after generation the poets, theoreticians and the littérateurs fed and fattened it because ultimately they derived their individual authority from it.

LACK OF HUMOUR

Though drama was intended to represent various situations of life [1]) and thus to remain close to it, yet peculiarly enough, it maintained a wide distance preferring attachment to the ideal atmosphere of the epics. Divorced from life and the atmosphere around, it failed to appreciate and grasp the essential features of life and persisted in glorifying the ideal themes. Except in very few cases the poets never cared to produce situations full of fun and gaiety, sparkling with wit and juicy humour. In their zeal for presenting only the ideal they never felt uneasy at discouraging the natural and spontaneous and thereby failed to imbue their works with that sense of humour, which lends infinite charm and hilarity resulting in a willing suspension of physical or psychical tension.

Whether due to a peculiar native philosophy or an inbred contempt for the niceties of life, the dramatist very rarely allowed himself to depict the lighter side of life. While defining the characteristics of drama, BHARATA [2]) emphasised the aspects of *vinodakaraṇaṃ*: the performance should be a source of delight which must include the lighter aspects of life. Instruction is not the function of art, says COOMARASWAMY [3]). DHANAÑJAYA [4]) also ridicules the idea that the drama could serve any other purpose except offering healthy delight to people. Of course the pleasure should be consistent with the main objective of attaining perfect bliss through the agencies of Dharma, Artha and Kāma. Therefore in order to fulfil a higher function, it must deal with an ideal. This was, perhaps, a fundamental difference between the Sanskrit and the European dramatist that the former never attempted to paint life as it was, but concentrated on a mythical reality which

1) NS K.M., I, 78.
2) *Ibid.*, I, 86; see also XXXVII, 33.
3) COOMARASWAMY, *Dance of Śiva*, p. 39.
4) DR, I, 6:
'ānandaniṣyandiṣu rūpakeṣu vyutpattimātraṃ phalam alpabuddhiḥ yo 'pītihāsādivad āha sādhus tasmai namaḥ svāduparāṅmukhāya.'

though beyond time, is supposed to influence at all times the conduct of people. But being a common mode of delight for all, it is doubtful if the drama could ever substitute for the functions of a sacrifice or a sacred religious rite. In accordance with the advice of Kāmasūtra [1]), a worthy citizen was expected to seek the company of parasites, buffoons or even shampoorers. He was further advised to sit in the company of courtesans, society girls, who beside catering for sensuous pleasures, indulged in providing excellent opportunities for fun, laughter, humour, repartees, smutty jokes and intellectual diversions. Perhaps the odium of the frailties of human nature and feelings of transitoriness weighed so heavily on him that the poet only looked for suggested and approved patterns, little caring whether they corresponded with contemporary models. Had there been a people's stage, the tendency to overlook the real and vital in life would have been surely resented and counteracted. But experiments were carried out in the courtly atmosphere, where only approved types of heroes and heroines figured. This not only presented a sordid, lifeless and artificial atmosphere but it also limited the vision of the dramatist to the extent that he failed to appreciate the individual in his contemporary society. His range was so narrowed that he did not care to look at the comic and lighter side of life, which was more sunny and colourful. In fact, most of these dramatists failed to look beyond the superficial, the artificial and also the traditional with which they stuffed their compositions. Steeped as they were in a traditional frame of mind it never occurred to them that ultimately the dramatic mood depends on a good sense of humour. And a sense of humour springs from the capacity of seeing two sides of a problem or in other words from the power of seeing beyond oneself [2]).

However, it would be too sweeping to generalize this condemnation. The Brāhmaṇical concept of life laying stress on a fixed order of events, made little allowance for supreme humour mainly because there was no organized revolt against the traditional notions. Those who revolted, confined their resentment to religious and philosophical concepts alone, without introducing any innovations in the literary forms. The dramas of Aśvaghoṣa are good examples of this slavish tendency, he conforms to the traditional

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1) *Kāmasutra*, I, IV, 17-25; 34-36.
2) Nicoll, *History of English Drama*, IV, p. 60.

theory in all its details. But credit should be given to the masterminds of KĀLIDĀSA amd ŚŪDRAKA, who exhibited superior dramatic craft by introducing the humorous element in their plays. The jester in the plays of KĀLIDĀSA is not that traditional fool, indulging in coarse stale humour and occasionally complaining of hunger. His graphic descriptions of inconveniences caused in the hunting expedition in Śakuntalā [1]) are fairly savoury. Occasionally he bursts forth with apt humorous expressions flooding the theme with a radiant smile as when comparing Mālavikā with a cuckoo caught by a cat when queen Dhāriṇī puts the poor girl in prison [2]). Even some of the dialogues of two friends of Śakuntalā in the penance-grove are pithy and juicy. But ŚŪDRAKA's Maitreya scores more hits. Besides dwelling on the eternal problem of gastronomy he knows to make the best use of miseries inflicted by abject poverty. His humour is simply devastating when the burglar steals away the jewel-box of Vasantasenā and he himself hands over the treasure half-asleep [3]). Similarly while entering the palatial mansion of Vasantasenā, his remarks that what an amount of virtuous acts will be required to become brother of such a wealthy courtesan, are pretty striking [4]). Compared to this ŚRĪHARṢA's jester Vasantaka tries to bring relief by silly suggestions or by impersonating a drunkard in a stale and stupid manner. BHAVABHŪTI by temperament was serious and scholarly. He could have introduced a fool in Mālatīmādhava to his best advantage where the role is played by a Narmasuhṛd. Perhaps, KEITH [5]) is right in maintaining that BHAVABHŪTI, being conscious of lack of the gift of humour deliberately and boldly dropped out the character of Vidūṣaka as he could not have handled the fool successfully. He tried to force some humour in act IV of Uttararāmacarita [6]), which could not be effective. However, there is some tinge of humour in act I where Lakṣmaṇa while showing the painting of four brothers arriving in Ayodhyā with their brides, out of modesty skips over the veiled figure of Urmilā, his bride. There Sītā, with a twinkle in her eyes enquires 'Who is there with a veiled face?'

[1]) *Śak.*, Act II, the opening passage.
[2]) *Māl.*, Act IV.
[3]) *Mṛcch.*, Act III.
[4]) *Ibid.*, Act IV.
[5]) KEITH, SD, p. 192.
[6]) *Ibid.*, footnote 1.

Similarly in act IV when the sacrificial horse of Rāma is captured by the young boys in VĀLMĪKI's hermitage, one of them gives a pretty humorous description of the horse [1]).

But the above are only rare instances. Otherwise this important dramatic element is conspicuous by its absence in the later dramas of VIŚĀKHADATTA, MURĀRI, BHAṬṬANĀRĀYAṆA and RĀJAŚEKHARA. At times a forced humour and melodramatic comic is produced but the effect is simply disgusting.

ROLE OF PRĀKRITS AND GROWTH OF VERNACULAR LITERATURE

It is an admitted fact that the classical Sanskrit reached its peak in KĀLIDĀSA both in drama and poetry. His successors followed the pattern with some advantage but the tide was against them. Sanskrit tended to become more and more artificial. Later writers could never maintain that balance in diction and sense [2]) and raised controversies to shift the emphasis from one aspect to another. This search for the soul of poetry, including drama, gave rise to new variations in diction and word jugglery [3]). The language separated from life took to elegance and was exclusively confined to the learned. Howsoever refined, graceful and ornate the language was, it had little or no relation to life. The distinction of the use of Prākrits in the dramatic compositions, which could have lent variety [4]) and vigour to them, became manifestly meaningless because these Prākrits were no longer studied or understood. So long as the plays were staged by the aid of professionals who probably belonged to the lower strata of society, the spectators and the author both must have felt delighted by this happy sprinkling of languages. But it is doubtful if in sessions devoted to mere reading of the plays the high-born at all enjoyed the Prākrit passages. The cultured were not expected to know the Prākrits, much less read and impersonate the roles. Thus the Prākrit portions might, in the beginning, have been omitted and then finally

[1]) URC, Act IV, 26.

[2]) *Raghuvaṃśa*, I, 1. Cf. *'vāgarthāv iva sampṛktau vāgarthapratipattaye'*.

[3]) MĀGHA and BHĀRAVI set the tradition of composing verses with the help of a single letter or two letters. In certain cases these verses would read the same in regular or reverse order. However, most complicated was *Citrabandha* where the poet had to arrange the letters of a verse in the form of a sword, wheel lotus and the like. For particulars see Daṇḍin's *Kāvyādarśa*.

[4]) NS K.M., XVII, 45-57.

abandoned being regarded as redundant. This explains why a poet of BHAVABHŪTI's stature refused to regale his audience with verses in Prākrit and stuffed his plays with an abundant number of verses in Sanskrit, which perhaps could be relished by the learned. The author of Mahānāṭaka dropped the Prākrits completely. Very rarely did MURĀRI waste his literary skill in composing verses in Prākrit. Though RĀJAŚEKHARA tried to defend the claim of Prākrits[1]) and also composed a playlet in Prākrit alone —that was intended to demonstrate his versatility and erudition—, otherwise his forte lay in Sanskrit compositions. It was on the composition of Bālarāmāyaṇa and Bālabhārata that he claimed his identity with VĀLMĪKI [2]).

Thus, the gulf which already existed between the realistic forces and the reality of life on one hand and the drama on the other further widened as Sanskrit could no longer represent the essential dramatic elements of variety and vigour. Though the number of spurious plays went on increasing in the later period, yet sensible poets took to the composition of lyrics and reflective stanzas, which could earn them little fame as dramatists.

Another reason which must have discouraged the playwrights was the growing consciousness of the spread of vernaculars which threatened to oust Sanskrit completely. Sensible poets must have foreseen the futility of writing dramas for which the market was diminishing. So when the Mohammedans arrived on the scene, the flame of Sanskrit had already burnt up its reserves and was emitting only a faint glow before its total extinction. In fact the success of the Muslim rule was in the circumstances hardly a matter for surprise. Because, by the time they arrived Hindu India had neither the solidarity of a national language, stage or literature nor the spirit to combat the invasion [3]). However, it may have affected the patronage which poets received from the kings and petty

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1) *Karpūramañjarī* I, 8. The Sanskrit rendering of the original Prākrit verse is as follows:

'paruṣaḥ saṃskṛtagumphaḥ prākṛtagumpho 'pi bhavati sukumāraḥ
puruṣamahilānāṃ yāvad ihāntaraṃ teṣu tāvat'.

2) *Bālabhārata* or *Pracaṇḍapāṇḍava*, I, 12:

'babhūva Valmīkabhavaḥ purā kaviḥ
tataḥ prapede bhuvi Bhartṛmeṇṭhatāṃ,
tataḥ sthito yaḥ Bhavabhūtirekhayā
sa vartate samprati Rājaśekharaḥ'.

3) KEITH, HSL, p. 145.

chiefs, who were either totally decimated or were engaged in building confederacies in Rājputana and elsewhere.

Recitation Versus Staging of the Plays

As enjoined in Nāṭyaśāstra [1]), the drama was intended to be staged on important festivals, ceremonies, coronations and other celebrations and that too in the presence of an enlightened and learned audience. Though the criterion of the play lay in its capacity for being staged, the satisfaction and success of the playwright lay in the appreciation of the cultured. Such occasions, unlike modern times, were quite rare and far apart and became still more restricted with the arrival of foreign rulers. In addition to the above disadvantages the enactment depended on the whim and mood of the patron at whose bidding the poet composed the piece. Under such circumstances it was quite natural that most of the time the plays, like poems, were simply read and recited. Since in spite of numerous facilities of stage and theatre-halls, several good plays are nowadays read and relished in dramatic clubs, this practice may have been quite popular in ancient and medieval India. This tendency deprived the dramatist of the opportunity of improving the technique and detecting his errors, contributing much to the weakening of the dramatic effect of his plays.

The view that there always existed opportunities for the reading and reciting of the plays rather than their staging is further confirmed by the epic influence from which the drama could never free itself till the last. In course of time this tendency might have greatly promoted the recitation-clubs or *Goṣṭhīs*, especially towards the later period. Such a state should have normally encouraged the poets to compose lyrical and descriptive stanzas with no respect for the length of the play. The trend of Sanskrit poetry all along has been to achieve distinction by means of fanciful and metaphorical narrations and hyperbolic descriptions. It had been an essential feature of functional poetry because on the one hand it added to the power and glory of the person or deity who was described and on the other it earned merit for the poet. There were other factors of course, which encouraged the poet to be descriptive, but in the court environment and occasionally in the presence of

[1]) NS K.M., I, 20-25; IV, 247-48; *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, I, 12-14; see also GUPTA, IT, pp. 21-24.

a royal personage, descriptions of royal prowess and glorification of the king's family were the main factors. However, amongst princes there may have been a few men of letters who might have shown appreciation for a minute study of nature or depth of human feelings. Perhaps that explains why a Sanskrit dramatist is least worried about the unities of time and place. In other words the drama had started usurping the field of poets. The drama and non-dramatic poetry were treated as twin sisters from the very beginning. They were too closely related arts whose function did not differ much materially. As such while borrowing the elements of diction, style, theme, and characters the dramatist consciously or unconsciously was influenced by the non-dramatic poetry without ever giving serious thought to any overlappings which detracted from the dramatic effect substantially. Most of the dramas of the later period, like Anargharāghava of MURĀRI, Mahānāṭaka of DĀMODARA and Bālarāmāyaṇa of RĀJAŚEKHARA, were not capable of being staged, but in all likelihood, they may have been recited in parts. These were only pedantic extensions designed on previous patterns and had no commendable feature.

In addition to these comparatively well-known plays, hundreds of other plays of inferior quality continued to be composed out of literary curiosity. Dramas with legendary and semi-legendary themes, court-comedies, semi-historical plays, allegorical plays, romantic and farcical plays and then the irregular types all came in vast numbers but without any dramatic excellence. It is a curious fact that the decadent period saw more compositions of these pseudo-dramatic performances which have exceeded over six hundred [1]). Like the English drama, most of these were 'Poetic-plays' written by romantic poets with no thought for the stage but with the objective of eulogising a patron or to satisfy their personal whims.

[1]) A detailed list of the dramas belonging to the later period is given in the following works, which should by no means be regarded as complete as hundreds of such plays have not been yet catalogued. The information given in the following treatises will be found useful: SCHUYLER, *Bibliography of the Sanskrit drama*, Columbia University publication, New York (1906); STEN KONOW, *Das Indische Drama*, Berlin (1911); S. K. DE, *History of Sanskrit Literature*, Calcutta (1947).

Philosophy of Life

An important factor the influence of which is always underestimated, but which affected the growth of poetry, drama and other creative arts, was the frame of mind of the leaders who influenced the average man. It was the ascetics, philosophers and moralists who were mainly responsible for a pessimistic attitude to life which condemned all joys and pursuits in life as illusory [1]) and diverted the devout individual from the original home of bliss. The Karman theory preached the gospel that the individual had no control over the present. But through virtuous acts and other approved devices he could improve his future birth. In other words, the fatalistic aspect of this doctrine discouraged any initiative in changing the phase of present life and its appeal hypnotized its adherents, leaving them pessimistic and inactive. This unwholesome attitude pushed people to a life of negation which on one hand disallowed the development of a vigorous national life and on the other laid down the foundations of a kill-joy culture. If it were logically and correctly interpreted, the Karman doctrine is not very harmful. For in our present the past is reflected and the future is shaped by the actions in present. But the cumulative effect on the average mind was different and often disastrous. Instead of building a hopeful outlook, it regarded the present as sealed and aimed at accumulating religious merit in accordance with the Brāhmaṇical statutes. In addition to this psychology there existed another equally gloomy belief that things were destined by fate, working in an order beyond the intelligibility of the doer [2]). Such a view of life was bound to take away all initiative.

It is strange that the same ambitious Aryans who aspired to wealth, sons, cattle, glorious deeds and several other material possessions in the Vedic period, changed their tone in the later period emphasising the doctrine of renunciation. Asceticism became the order of the day and renouncement of wordly possessions was acclaimed a supreme act. The speculative minds became engrossed

[1]) Shilotri, IATC, p. 41: "By their deep meditation in life and cosmos they decided that nothing in this world was of permanent value—worldly goods are perishable, the human body is full of filth and a mere link in the chain of life that connects the individual soul with the universal soul". See also the *Maitrāyaṇī Upan.*

[2]) Keith, HSL, p. 146.

in finding answers to eternal problems, often neglecting their own duties and functions. Members of the warrior class indulged in theological discussions, leaving the administration to God and chaos. In the sacrifices the princes vied with each other in donating entire state treasuries to the Brāhmaṇas, and turning recluse [1]). These were all golden ideals for individuals but the influence was damaging because no political or administrative consolidation was possible under such circumstances. Buddhism and Jainism though reactionary in external form, were little inclined to abandon popular Brāhmaṇical superstitions [2]). This definitely precluded the possibility of a vigorous national life and a national sense because the human energies were not wielded to create a heaven on this earth but were aimed at acquiring heavenly bliss in the succeeding birth. Therefore, the foreign invaders had not to fight any organised nation, but divided chiefs who either bore jealously against each other or who hated the Mohammedans not because of their totalitarian designs but because of fear of contamination which might arise from contact with infidels and idol-breakers. In short India had to pay a heavy price for its spiritual glory and achievements. In spite of her tremendous man-power, material resources, geographical advantages and a rich heritage it remained a feasting ground of hungry hordes of invaders.

Such a conception condemning the joy and pleasures of life could not be a source of inspiration for the general weal. On one hand it encouraged a section of the people to indulge excessively in pleasures and on the other the creative energies and faculties were employed in maintenance of the Brāhmaṇical order. While VĀTSYĀYANA commended [3]) the science of love and occasional indulgence in the pleasures of life, the philosophers and some of the poets con-

1) SHILOTRI, IATC, p. 46: "Some sacrifices such as Rājasūya and Aśvamedha grew into such complicated ceremonies that they lasted over years, and princes were known to have spent their fortune in their proper performance. We have anecdotes of Indian princes who became beggars through having lavished their wealth as *Dakṣiṇā* upon Brāhmaṇas who performed sacrifices". Anecdotes of Śivi, Bali and Hariścandra are too well known in the mythology.

2) KEITH, HSL, p. 146; see also MASSON, *La religion populaire dans le canon bouddhique pāli*, Leuven (1942).

3) *Kāmasūtra*, I, II, 2-6, 12-13, 20-21; III, 1-4.

demned the erotic life [1]. The ascetics called this beautiful human body foul and full of stinking flesh. Ready-made devices were distributed to kill desire, the root cause of all miseries. Is it possible to maintain a healthy interest in life and its pursuits under such extreme conditions?

In their frenzied zeal to paint life as illusory and this world as mere illusion (*māyā*), the Indo-Aryans put unnecessary emphasis on certain aspects to the detriment of others which were essential for the healthy growth of individual and society. It can be said without undue exaggeration that whatever they undertook to develop, they carried it to perfection and whatever they neglected, they never cared to take notice of it [2]. In this lop-sided state of affairs they concentrated more on the contents of the Śāstras and the ideals represented by the mythical and legendary heroes and kings, on the accounts of individuals and small communities rather than on historical facts relating to the Aryan community as a whole in ancient or contemporary periods. This lack of proper historical sense created a pessimistic attitude towards historical research in general and did not allow the development of national feelings. It is only in recent times after coming in contact with the West that the Universities of India have started encouraging historical researches. Otherwise the Orthodox mind is still averse to this scheme of research. There are tradition-ridden educated Indians who still believe that solutions of our problems have been already incorporated in the Dharmaśāstras and other religious books. It is usual for a Sanskrit Paṇḍita to ridicule efforts to find out dates and facts concerning a particular poet or author, which according to him is mere running after chaff.

Naturally, under the prevailing circumstances and beliefs, the heroes of a mythological age appeared real, as they had lived a life which was denied to later generations. No serious notice was taken of contemporary princes and their deeds, because both were regarded illusory and transitory. In the circumstances literature and the fine arts could not yield that joy which could compare with the mirage of eternal bliss. They only helped the process of disintegration both in thought and deeds.

[1]) BHARTṚHARI, *Śatakatrayam*, BHAVAN ed., Bombay (1946), III, 7, 16, 18, 26, 31, 32, 36, 38, etc.

[2]) SHILOTRI, IATC, pp. 40-41.

TRAGI-COMEDIES AND THEIR LIMITATIONS

India has always been a land of contrasts and paradoxical situations. The position was not very different in ancient and comparatively later times. On one hand the Nāṭyaśāstra and other treatises banned the representations of ugly scenes [1]), deformity, obscenity, death, calamities and ordained that the plays should have a happy ending. But at the same time the philosophers and religious leaders painted life as full of filth and not worthy to be looked at. The Enlightened One took his inspiration from the sight of an old wrinkled face and a dead body which was being carried to a funeral. Where was the reconciliation between the two extremes? But by keeping the forces of realism at bay, the roots of literature were weakened. In a few instances like that of Vikramorvaśī, Nāgānanda, Uttararāmacarita, Mālatīmādhava and Caṇḍakauśika noble tragedies were converted into ordinary comedies because of these injunctions. An enlightened audience with the back-ground of epic tales knew that Rāma and Sītā could never unite at the last but the fool of a dramatist did the impossible for the survival of the traditional theory. What was the use of that pathos, that human touch and display of emotions and evoking of lofty sentiments if the end was not related to reality? "All is well that ends well" is a good maxim, provided it is natural, spontaneous and not far removed from reality. The remarkable consistency with which the Sanskrit dramatists conformed to the practice of happy ending can only be the result of a well-baked and firmly established tradition which aimed at seeing something higher in the plays than mere enjoyment [2]). In the earlier stages the drama, as observed earlier, might have had some magico-religious function to perform. Likewise, it was suggested that the Indian tradition of a happy-ending may have been symbolic of some old ritual [3]). But a continued obeisance to it cannot be justified by any reasonable standards. KEITH's [3]) attempt to explain the happy ending by connecting its origin with the spring-festival ritual symbolising summer's triumph over winter is hardly convincing. But are we competent enough to pronounce judgement on what the

[1]) NS K.M., XXIV, 280-83.

[2]) V. SAUNDERS, *Literary Aspects of the Absence of Tragedy in the Classical Sanskrit Drama*, JRAS 41 (1921), p. 153.

[3]) KEITH, *Origin of Drama*, JRAS 1912, p. 423.

people wanted? It was not improbable that the dramatist yielded to the taste of his patrons and admirers, who were always the cultured élite of society [1]. Whatever may have been the reaction of the orthodox mind to this denial of factual representation, it caused a big gap between real life and life on the stage or as reflected in literature. Ultimately a defective outlook on life did not permit the enactment of tragic themes and did not create conditions for representations of first rate comedies even. Tragedy was averted because of biased injunctions and comedy could not prosper because of faulty vision.

[1]) LINDENAU, *Bhāsa-Studien*, p. 31, note 1.

CHAPTER TEN

A RAPID SURVEY OF DECADENT FEATURES IN POST-KĀLIDĀSAN DRAMAS

It is often difficult to shine when one's predecessor may have risen to phenomenal heights. It was a misfortune of Sanskrit drama that its leading dramatist should have been followed by a king-poet in HARṢA, who despite his acknowledged poetic genius, could not maintain the dramatic tempo and standard set by KĀLIDĀSA. Comparison with KĀLIDĀSA proved fatal to HARṢA, otherwise he would have normally received greater praise for his three playlets. Though most scholars are inclined to assume that the decadence in Sanskrit drama set in after BHAVABHŪTI [1]), the dramatic literature started showing the symptoms of a gradual decline in HARṢA's period. The process of decline was complete by the time MURĀRI and RĀJAŚEKHARA appeared on the scene. Out of the post-Kālidāsan dramatists only VIŚĀKHADATTA and BHAVABHŪTI are endowed with distinct qualities of poetic diction, plot-construction, powerful characterization, systematic co-relation of situations and incidents and, above all, the ability to create dramatic effects. While HARṢA's plays show some improvement in technique and the art of devising the plot the compositions of BHAṬṬANĀRĀYAṆA, MURĀRI and RĀJAŚEKHARA can be better read and enjoyed as poems rather than dramatic pieces worthy of being staged, though each one of these writers is a great poet. There is more of poetry in these dramas and some of them read better as *Kāvyas* with prose portions serving as connecting links and adding to the general information only [2]). Their exuberance for high sounding words in lengthy meters, soliloquies and descriptions of uncommon length, indifference to the development of characters, disregard of the unities of time and space, and contempt for the realities of life, all contributed to hastening the end of Sanskrit drama.

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1) JAGIRDAR, DSL, p. 157; see also KEITH, SD, p. 242.
2) DE, HSL, p. 445.

After MURĀRI and RĀJAŚEKHARA the flame of drama does not show any glow except in the case of Prabodhacandrodaya of KṚṢṆAMIŚRA, when it suddenly lights up to illumine the allegorical play momentarily. Mention may also be made of four one-act monologue plays discovered and published in 1922 under the title of Caturbhāṇī [1]). The four *Bhāṇas* are Ubhayābhisārikā of VARARUCI, Padma-prābhṛtaka of ŚŪDRAKA, Dhūrta-viṭa-saṃvāda of ĪŚVARADATTA and Pāda-tāḍitaka of ŚYĀMILAKA. On the basis of the references made by ABHINAVAGUPTA [2]), KUNTAKA [3]), KṢEMENDRA [4]) and HEMACANDRA [5]), the plays are believed to have been composed round about the 10th century, though THOMAS [6]) is inclined to place them in the time of HARṢA or even that of the later Guptas. Compared to other regular full-length plays of the same period these plays present more variety, vigour, greater simplicity, power of satire and elements of comic relief which are wanting in poets and dramatists of a later period. The later poets though vast in numbers handled the old worn-out themes with varying degree of success, exhibiting more of artificiality than dramatic power. The set pattern of *Nāṭikā* established by HARṢA on the basis of the Mālavikāgnimitra, continued to regale those who attempted court-comedies. The epics and Purāṇas supplied themes for *Nāṭaka*s and other varieties which were mostly poor imitations and farcical plays under the label of drama. It is strange that allegorical plays continued to be composed till the end of the 18th century when medicine and philosophy were also made themes for plays [7]). Although some plays flashed some brilliance here and there yet being artificial, imitative and poor in dramatic qualities their

[1]) Edited by RAMAKRISHNA KAVI and S. K. RAMANATHA SASTRI, Trichur (1922). For further information see F. W. THOMAS, Centenary supplement to JRAS (1924), pp. 129-36, JRAS (1924), p. 262; DE, in JRAS (1926), pp. 63-90.

[2]) *Caturbhāṇī*, Preface. The reference occurs in *Abhinava-Bhāratī*, Chapter VII.

[3]) Edited by S.K. DE, Calcutta (1928), I, 111.

[4]) DE, HSL, p. 249 n.

[5]) See quotation in *Kāvyānuśāsana*, N.S.P. ed., Bombay (1934), p. 339.

[6]) See DE, HSL, p. 249.

[7]) *Jīvānanda*, Madras (1947). The poet aims at presenting the beauties of Sanskrit dramatic art with the virtues of medical science and the excellences of *Vedānta* philosophy. The play is composed by VEDAKAVI under the name of his patron ĀNANDARĀYA MAKHIN.

appeal was probably confined to court circles. However it would be advantageous to trace the germs of decadence in some of the comparatively better known compositions. It must be made clear that no attempt is being made here to assess the literary merits of the plays which is perhaps beyond the scope of this survey.

A curious feature of the decadent drama consists in the unnecessary addition of benedictory verses and lengthening of the prologues. While HARṢA added five verses to his *Nāndī*, BHAṬṬANĀRĀYAṆA comes a close second with four lengthy verses. Probably it was introduced to offer more space to the poet for voicing his personal claims as is evident from a boastful account of literary achievements and embellishments which later became a fashion reaching disproportionate dimensions in RĀJAŚEKHARA [1]). In a way it has proved of some advantage as the information regarding the poet's family, literary career and the patron, helped in determining the chronology in some cases. But an undue accentuation on the literary claims gives the impression that the Sanskrit dramatists had suddenly awoken from a long slumber. BHAVABHŪTI, acclaimed as the Indian SHAKESPEARE by KLEIN [2]), in addition to his claim of a noble heritage and vast learning, styles himself "*padavākyapramāṇajñaḥ*" [3]) "skilled in the art of diction and style" and also claims the invention of new plots. MURĀRI while justifying the selection of a banal theme from the Rāmāyaṇa, rejoices in the self-imposed title of "*bāla-Vālmīki*" [4]) and continues in this strain for no less than 13 verses. Still more ludicrous and vainglorious is his statement that he alone is capable of fathoming the depths of learning while there is no dearth of pretenders [5]). RĀJAŚEKHARA superceding all of them, claims the title of "*kavirāja*", tracing his poetic descent from Vālmīki through BHARTṚMEṆṬHA and BHAVA-

1) DE, HSL, p. 450 n.
2) J. L. KLEIN, *Geschichte des Dramas* III, Leipzig (1866), p. 51.
3) URC, Prologue, Banaras (1949), p. 3.
4) *Anargharāghava*, Calcutta (1936), p. 11: '*Murārināmadheyasya bālavālmīkeḥ*', etc.
5) The following verse quoted by KEITH, SD, p. 231, is found in several MSS.:

'daivīṃ vācam upāsate hi bahavaḥ sāraṃ tu sārasvataṃ
jānīte nitaram asau gurukulakliṣṭo Murāriḥ kaviḥ,
adbhir laṅghita eva vānarabhaṭaiḥ kintv asya gambhīratāṃ
ā pātālanimagnapīvaratanur jānāti manthācalaḥ'.

BHŪTI [1]). In 20 lengthy verses he sums up the traditions of his family, which is later outdone by JAYADEVA in the prologue of Prasannarāghava. Curiously enough this feature is more visible in those plays which deal with the story of Rāma. Thus, before the actual commencement of the play the dramatist started announcing to his readers and admirers that he had taken special pains to stuff the composition with the latest trends in the Kāvya style.

1. ŚRĪ HARṢA

In addition to the Nāgānanda, a drama in five acts, HARṢA is said to be the author of Ratnāvalī and Priyadarśikā, two *Nāṭikās* of four acts each, dealing with love episodes of Udayana, the legendary king of Kauśāmbī. The author was king of Sthāṇvīśvara and Kānyakubja and is known to have reigned approximately from A.D. 606 to 648. Tradition also maintains that this poet-king gave considerable wealth to BĀṆA and to another poet named DHĀVAKA erroneously identified with BHĀSA, who is supposed to have composed the three plays under the name of his patron [2]). In spite of his poetic qualities and discerning nature, HARṢA was not very wise in selecting a theme which had already been handled by the more capable KĀLIDĀSA and BHĀSA. He further demonstrates his lack of judgement and originality by composing two plays on the same theme inasmuch as the hero Udayana or Vatsarāja, the chief queen Vāsavadattā, her attendant Kāñcanamālā, the jester Vasantaka by name, are all shown identically in both the plays. Even the situations, descriptions, motifs and general treatment, not to mention some verses, are not only identical but are repeated verbatim, making the two plays look like replicas of each other. The main difference is merely in the names of the heroines Sāgarikā and Āraṇyakā, who, because of the exigencies of the circumstances of their discovery from the ocean and a forest, are

[1]) *Pracaṇḍapāṇḍava*, edited by CARL CAPPELLER, Strassburg (1885), Act I, 12, p. 4:

babhūva Valmīkabhavaḥ purā kaviḥ
tataḥ prapede bhuvi Bhartṛmeṇṭhatāṃ
tataḥ sthito yo Bhavabhūtirekhayā
sa vartate samprati Rājaśekharaḥ.

[2]) See KEITH, SD, p. 171. While explaining his definition of poetry MAMMAṬA refers to the gift of wealth made to poet DHĀVAKA by HARṢA: "*Śrīharṣāder Dhāvakādīnam iva dhanam*".

distinguished by the above two names. The theme is the usual light-hearted court love of the king for a maiden of unknown status, followed by a secret meeting arranged with the help of the jester. The meeting is interrupted by the timely arrival of the chief queen, who naturally resents this amorous disposition of the king with a menial and rebukes him for his infidelity. Infuriated and stung by jealousy she contrives to imprison the girl and the jester who always manage to escape the prison. Finally the queen is made to accept the girl as her co-wife when the latter's identity is revealed either through machinations of a minister or through some magic formula. In all *Nāṭikās* and even in the case of a *Saṭṭaka*, this plot is repeated with fixed characters and slight modifications. Among the later writers RĀJAŚEKHARA follows the same pattern in Karpūramañjarī and Viddhaśālabhañjikā, though the former is a play of the *Saṭṭaka* variety. Out of the later court-comedies Lalitaratnamālā of KṢEMENDRA, Karṇasundarī of BILHAṆA, Pārijātamañjarī of MADANA, Mṛgāṅkalekhā of VIŚVANĀTHA are better known. But their pattern is the same as that of Ratnāvalī and Viddhaśālabhañjikā and some of them are remarkable for their bad imitation [1].

While it is natural for a poet or dramatist to be influenced by a predecessor of accepted eminence, especially by the poet whom one admires and adores, a blind imitation and indiscriminate borrowing is an indication of some inherent flaw in the borrower. Because of their dependence the poets were legitimately expected to be influenced by the epics and other sources. As such they might have even borrowed a few motifs or expressions as in the case of MĀGHA who has drawn from VĀLMĪKI [2] or as KĀLIDĀSA [3] who was influenced by AŚVAGHOṢA. There is a good deal of difference between a strong influence and conscious borrowing. In HARṢA's plays instances of borrowing are by far the most numerous. KEITH's defence [4] that HARṢA is a clever borrower is not justified because his indebtedness to KĀLIDĀSA is too obvious and can never be regarded as a coincidence by any stretch of imagination. Bees tormenting the heroine as in first act of Śak., the heroine's ruse to

[1]) DE, HSL, p. 472-73.
[2]) See O. WALTER, *Übereinstimmungen . . . bei den indischen Kunstdichtern von* VĀLMĪKI *bis auf* MĀGHA, Leipzig (1905).
[3]) E. H. JOHNSTON, *Saundarānanda*, Oxford (1932), Preface.
[4]) KEITH, SD, p. 176.

hide her departure from the sight of the lover, meetings arranged by the jester, his revealing of the secret in a half-asleep state as in Māl., the imprisonment of the heroine, the use of magic spells and drugs in counteracting the effect of poison as in Māl., etc. bear no small resemblance to the compositions of KĀLIDĀSA. Similarly a few expressions of the jester and the scene of conflagration in the last act are reminiscent of BHĀSA's Svapanavāsavadattā.

In addition to the above the following are further striking examples of borrowing found in the Ratnāvalī alone.

1). Rat., I, 10

dakṣiṇaṃ spandate cakṣuḥ phalākāṅkṣā na me kvacit:

Śak., I, 16.

2). Rat., I, 19

ekato guruvacanam anyato dayitadarśanasukham iti gamanāgamanavimūḍham adyāpi dolāyate me hṛdayam:

Śak., II, 17

itas tapasvīkāryam ito gurujanājñā dvayam anatikramaṇīyaṃ, kim atra vidheyam.

3). Rat., act II, statement of the hero:

tām eva asyāṃ śilāyām ālikhya tayā citragatayātmānaṃ vinodayāmi iti:

Megh., II, 45.

tvām ālikhya praṇayakupitāṃ dhaturāgaiḥ śilāyāṃ
ātmānaṃ te caraṇapatitaṃ yāvad icchāmi kartum.

4). Rat., II, 14

anyonyaprītikṛtaṃ samānurūpānurāgakulavayasāṃ
keṣāñ cid eva manye samāgamo bhavati puṇyavatāṃ:

Mal., III, 15

anāturotkaṇṭhitayoḥ prasidhyatā samāgamenāpi ratir na māṃ prati parasparaprāptinirāśayor varaṃ śarīranāśo 'pi samānurāgayoḥ.

5). Rat., III, 14

dṛṣṭā dṛṣṭim adho dadāti kurute nālāpam ābhāṣitā
śayyāyām parivṛtya tiṣṭhati balād āliṅgitā vepate:

Śak., II, 11; I, 31
vācaṃ na miśrayati yadyapi madvacobhiḥ.

6). Rat., act II, description of Sagarikā's beauty:
īdṛśaṃ kanyāratnaṃ mānuṣaloke na dṛśyate tat tarkayāmi prajāpater api idaṃ nirmāya vismayaḥ samutpannaḥ:

Śak., I, 26
mānuṣīṣu kathaṃ vā syād asya rūpasya sambhavaḥ
na prabhātaralaṃ jyotir udeti vasudhātalāt.

7). Rat., III, 6
svaṅgair eva vibhūṣitāsi vahasi kleśāya kiṃ maṇḍanaṃ:
Śak., I, 20
kim iva hi madhurāṇāṃ maṇḍanaṃ nākṛtīnāṃ.

8). Rat., IV, 3
antaḥpurāṇāṃ vihitavyavasthaḥ pade pade 'haṃ skhalitāni rakṣañ jarāturaḥ samprati daṇḍanītyā sarvaṃ nṛpasyānukaromi vṛttam:

Śak., V, 3
ācāra ity avahitena mayā gṛhītā
yā vetrayaṣṭir avarodhagṛheṣu rājñaḥ
kāle gate bahutithe mama saiva jātā
prasthānaviklavagater avalambanārthā.

In addition to the above there are several parallel situations and expressions which indicate that HARṢA was not merely influenced by KĀLIDĀSA but deliberately chose those situations and later presented the same advantageously as his own. It may be even assumed that perhaps such instances of borrowing may not have been considered plagiarism in ancient India, but then it definitely affects the much-claimed originality of the poet.

In Nāgānanda, HARṢA introduces a different theme which is indicative of his own mental state of trying to bring about a reconciliation between the two streams of Buddhism and Hinduism. He glorifies Buddha in the *Nāndī* and introduces a hero steeped in the highest Buddhist ideals. It is mentioned in Harṣacarita that the king had expressed the intention of embracing Buddhism [1])

[1]) DE, HSL, p. 258 n.

which is confirmed by YUAN CHWANG's testimony describing the king as a Buddhist in his old age [1]). Therefore he selected a plot and a hero emphasizing the unlimited benevolence of the Buddhist faith. But he weakens the plot himself by the intervention of the goddess Gaurī who is ushered in to avert the tragedy. Granting that some elements of a supernatural type are not out of place in a theme centred around the *Vidyādharas*, a minor division of gods, the poet introduces several scenes which are not only disgusting but absolutely incapable of being staged. Though BHARATA is strictly against such scenes of horror and terror [2]), HARṢA allows the hero's body to be torn by the claws and talons of the heavenly hawk Garuḍa. He even goes to the extent of showing the streams of blood flowing from the veins and chunks of human flesh being pecked by GARUḌA [3]). In his enthusiasm to present an ideal Buddhist or a miniature Buddha, the dramatist forgets the stage and the dramatic proprieties in allowing the victim to be carried off to the mountain peak swinging in the beak of the bird. The two parts of the play, one ending with Act III, depicting the hero as a love-smitten *Vidyādhara* prince and the second part in Acts IV and V, showing Jīmūtavāhana ready to sacrifice his life for a serpent lad forgetting his erstwhile love altogether, are totally incongruous and have no bearing on each other. There is decidedly a lack of harmony between the two which has weakened his *dénouement* considerably. It is amusing that after the identity of his victim had been revealed Garuḍa, like a new convert, is made to take a vow not to eat flesh and also promises that he will restore all the slain serpents to life. Contrary to BHARATA's injunctions the hero is shown dead on the stage and is only brought back to life by the timely intervention of Gaurī. In short, it must be admitted that the drama is faulty as regards its construction as it lacks unity of action [4]). Amongst the three plays the poet shows definite improvement in the Ratnāvalī. Perhaps it could be said that the Priyadarśikā served as a prelude to the composition of

[1]) *Ibid.*, p. 258.
[2]) NS K.M., XVIII, 19-20; DR, III, 34-35.
[3]) *Nāgānanda*, Act V, 16:
'śirāmukhaiḥ syandata eva raktaḥ adyāpi dehe mama māṃsam asti tṛptiṃ na paśyāmi ca te mahātman kiṃ bhakṣaṇāt tvaṃ virato garutman'.
[4]) R. D. KARMARKAR, in *Nāgānanda*, Bombay (1923), Preface, p. XXXI ff.

the Ratnāvalī. But the latter emerged as a piece of dramatic poetry rather than as an effective and well-developed comedy.

Undoubtedly HARṢA possessed great merits of simplicity and grace of language and also the ability to present a light comedy in simple diction but his plots are not well laid and the characterization is not of a high order. His heroines lack maidenly freshness and are depicted as if too eager to be loved. The queen lacks dignity and moves lifelessly as if set in a fixed mould. She is not the same dignified person with whom the reader is familiar in the Svapnavāsavadattā of BHĀSA. She is made to accept her co-wives without any positive justification unlike the one shown in Māl. by queen Dhāriṇī who has grace and majesty. On the other hand it appears that heroines had no chance of marrying the king unless put in that precarious position. It is not known why HARṢA compels all the heroines to attempt suicide. The situation of a love-lorn king depicted in Śak. and Māl. are more natural and convincing. Duśyanta while being separated from Śakuntalā is emaciated and inspires sympathy but the hero in Ratnāvalī has neither dignity nor composure. He laments at one moment and laughs at another. To him the death of Sāgarikā or her banishment to Ujjayinī is not important as he is ready to enjoy the feats of the magician without a wrinkle on his face. In quick succession he touches the feet of Vāsavadattā only to start lamenting next moment for Sāgarikā. The jester is ever conscious of his greed and gluttonous nature. He is stupid and his jokes and expressions are all stale. However, it is to the credit of HARṢA that he succeeded in setting a pattern which allowed the later poets to paint palace-love episodes in an artificial and artless manner.

2. BHAṬṬANĀRĀYAṆA.

BHAṬṬANĀRĀYAṆA who probably migrated from Kānyakubja to Bengal in about 800 A.D. and joined the court of king Ādiśūra [1], shows originality in chosing a novel theme mainly characterized by the sentiment of valour which naturally afforded vast potentialities for an effective dramatic representation. But carried away by his fondness of going into details, he seized the opportunity to parade through the entire war episode of the Mahābhārata

[1] KEITH, SD, p. 212; see also DE, HSL, p. 272.

stuffing the six acts of his only play with unnecessarily laborious narratives. In other words he considered the plot good enough to illustrate his poetic skill, little realising that the dramatic theme, when choked with narrative details of a Kāvya style, leaves no scope for the relief of dramatic effects. But he shares this shortcoming with several other dramatists and cannot be regarded as an isolated case.

If BHAṬṬANĀRĀYAṆA had lavished less care on his rhetorical rattlings by keeping a vigilant eye on the effectiveness of the situations, his Veṇīsaṃhāra could have been a forceful play. It is true that Bhīma, the hero, who takes a vow of vengeance against Duryodhana and his brother Duḥśāsana [1]), should have been depicted as brave, sturdy, relentless and furious. But the poet has painted him as a boastful, haughty and bullying character who scorns everything save the high-sounding bombastic statements which are his chief characteristic. As compared to Bhīma, his rival Duryodhana fares better in the role of a proud, arrogant, vain and selfish person who neither evokes sympathy nor love. Draupadī lacks the charm of a heroine. She is made to brood too much over the ignominious insult imposed on her and loses no chance to provoke Bhīma and making a dig at her other Pāṇḍava husbands. No doubt she is wronged by the folly of her husbands and therefore she should inspire the sympathy which she seldom commands. As a lady of noble birth she is expected to maintain some decorum, a ladylike charm, high-mindedness and serenity but this anathema of revenge has eclipsed her better side bringing out her desperate role of looking out for vengeance. She is left fretting and fuming and devoid of any finer feelings. With war clouds hovering around, Duryodhana's amorous advances to Bhānumatī in a love scene in act II, appear ridiculous. The news of Karṇa's death is narrated by Sundaraka in a long-drawn-out tedious style, sacrificing all the dramatic effect. It confirms that the author lacked restraint and had no control over the plot. In spite of his weak characterization and bad handling of the plot, BHAṬṬANĀRĀYAṆA's characters move with characteristic animation and have enough steam and energy in them.

Admittedly the topic BHAṬṬANĀRĀYAṆA chose gave him enough

[1]) *Veṇīsaṃhāra*, I, 15.

scope for depicting scenes of savagery, horror, blood-spilling, death and terror as depicted in act III. But as the theory forbade the enactment of such scenes, the dramatist had only to put fire into the narrations, which at times appear to be ridiculous and out of proportion. There is enough of horror, pathos, and action, but all devoid of dramatic action because of the poet's adherence to dramatic conventions [1]. Thus the plot is clumsily contrived, situations do not grow from each other and the chain of actions and incidents is loosely strung without any unifying theme.

The dramatist has also demonstrated his fondness for high-sounding words and long compounds, strung to loose but long sentences. Perhaps he regarded such passages as the best illustration of Ojas, which abounds in the Veṇīsaṃhāra [2]. The dialogues put in the mouth of Sundaraka and Pāñcālaka look like a page torn from SUBANDHU's Vāsavadattā or BĀṆA's prose. BHAṬṬANĀRĀYAṆA, like his predecessor HARṢA, shows his erudition by introducing the double entendre [3], which is a feature of the decadent period in a drama. The ambiguity in expression certainly interrupts the appreciation of dramatic action. It compels the spectator's mind to concentrate on a sense which may not have a direct connection with the actual happening at that moment. Though Veṇīsaṃhāra has been profusely cited by theorists, it is at best a typical example of half-poetical and half-dramatic composition which may be described as declamatory in character. It has been quoted both for its merits and defects by MAMMAṬA and VIŚVANĀTHA who chose several passages to show the literary blemishes of the play [4].

3. BHAVABHŪTI

In the earlier group of dramatists, BHAVABHŪTI probably is the youngest. However, the traditional Indian opinion ranking him only second to KĀLIDĀSA has some justification. Some of his

[1]) DE, HSL, p. 274.

[2]) *Veṇīsaṃhāra*, Act I, 21, 22, 27; Act II, 18, 19, 27 and the chamberlain's statement; Act III, 4-8, *Aśvatthāmā's* statement; Act IV, statements of Sūta and Sundaraka; Act V, 25-31; Act VI, statements made by the chamberlain and Pāñcālaka.

[3]) *Veṇīsaṃhāra*, Act I.

[4]) *Sāh. D.*, Banaras (1947), VII, 11-12, 14-15, pp. 726, 745, 763; *Kāvyaprakāśa*, VII, 60 ff.

admirers consider him even superior to KĀLIDĀSA because, discarding the often repeated sentiment of love, BHAVABHŪTI selected the ruling theme of pathos and made a perfect job of it. This distinction has earned him legitimate praise from the anthologists who maintain: '*Uttare Rāmacarite Bhavabhūtir viśiṣyate*, i.e. "in the play Uttararāmacarita BHAVABHŪTI surpasses (others)", which hints at the poetic achievements scored over KĀLIDĀSA. Perhaps the appreciation expressed reflects only a personal opinion of an admirer of BHAVABHŪTI as a poet and not as a dramatist.

As discussed earlier BHAVABHŪTI has left a vivid account of his family traditions and his personal achievements. He was probably a member of king Yaśovarmā's entourage who was defeated by king Lalitāditya of Kashmir in about 736 A.D. BHAVABHŪTI was a man of learning and well up in the Vedic traditions. He betrays familiarity with the Upaniṣads and some of the philosophical systems. Despite his achievements and lofty claims, he could not secure a patron like Vikramāditya who could recognise his worth. He shows familiarity with court life but seldom mentions any royal favour. Apparently he was depressed by the lack of proper appreciation [1]. Unlike KĀLIDĀSA he had to struggle hard for fame and fortune. Of the former it is doubtful if he received any in his life-time and about the latter we have no information. Like BĀṆA he had friendly relations with people of all types, especially with actors who may have helped him in bringing his plays on to the stage at the *Yātrā* festival of Kālapriyanātha [2]. The Mahāvīracarita is apparently his first composition in which he made an unsuccesful attempt to depict the heroic sentiment. He is no doubt successful in depicting Rāma's profoundness and Paraśurāma's fury, but on the whole the attempt is a failure. It is only a weak and meek type of heroism that he is able to bring out. He lacks the power to draw different types of characters; there is no change in his dramatis personae in all the three plays. Perhaps he could not identify himself with the various types of characters placing himself in different situations [3]. The speeches put in the mouth of Citraratha and Indra in act VI, leave an

[1]) DE, HSL, pp. 278-79.
[2]) *Ibid.*, pp. 278-79; KEITH, SD, p. 187; URC, I, p. 3: '*bhagavataḥ Kālapriyā-nāthasya yātrāyām āryamiśrān vijnāpayāmi*'.
[3]) BHANDARKAR, Collected Works, II, Poona (1928), p. 428.

impression of dull monotony and can at best suit a poem rather than a drama.

In the prologue to the Mālatīmādhava, a *Prakaraṇa* in 10 acts, the poet prides himself on his poetic and dramatic achievements and also announces his ingenuity in inventing new plots [1]. It can be ungrudgingly conceded that he combined two main and subordinate plots, probably borrowed, in an ingenious manner, from the Kathāsaritsāgara or the Bṛhatkathāmañjarī. He has successfully and skilfully blended the two love intrigues with exciting incidents by developing two parallel but contrasted plots. But the main defect of the play is that very often the main plot is overshadowed by the subsidiary one. The hero and heroine of the subsidiary story are daring, resourceful and lively as against the inactive hero and heroine of the main story. The former are fit to be introduced into a *Prakaraṇa* and are capable of providing some comic relief while Mālatī and Mādhava, the hero and heroine of the main story, are of a withdrawing type.

The entire plot of MM hangs on a chain of incidents, natural or supernatural. Granted that chance plays an important part in life its uncommon frequency at every turn demands too much of credulity. In a supernatural world such occurrences can be understood but in a *Prakaraṇa* this atmosphere of accidents and coincidence is unsuitable. One wonders at the good fortune of the hero and heroine of both stories, who remain unhurt through a bewildering maze of incidents where tigers prowl let loose in the streets, ghosts squeak in cemeteries, disgusting ghoulish acts are practised right and left, *Kāpālikas* are engaged in gruesome rites, man-stealers and kidnappers roam about freely and maidens are abducted for the purpose of being offered at sacrificial rites, persons skilled in magic powers fly through the air and the entire atmosphere is charged with fear, risk and suspense. Despite these and other odds BHAVABHŪTI escorts his cast safely to the destination of a "happy-ending" comedy. This may be an achievement for the poet, but unwittingly he has murdered the story.

One of the outstanding defects of this poet is his lack of restraint. Even when the play appears to have a natural ending after act VIII, the union of Mālatī and Mādhava being approved by the king, the poet takes a delight in adding two abduction scenes in

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1) MM, Act I, 6.

order to prolong the story. It is suggested [1] that BHAVABHŪTI vied with the author of the Mṛcchakaṭika and therefore added two more acts so as not to lag behind ŚŪDRAKA. Apart from lack of restraint he also suffers from lack of consistency, which has affected the construction of the plot. In this respect, probably he fares better in MVC making judicious changes in the epic tale and showing some skill in dramatic construction. But again the plot fails to impress because he has to cover incidents of fourteen long years and to demonstrate that Rāma was destined to win as all the strategies of Mālyavanta were sabotaged according to plan. This makes the entire conflict look artificial; it is further weakened by his lack of restraint. He seldom possesses any hold on the development of the plot with the result that too many important events are allowed to happen by mere accident. Therefore, acts V and IX hang upon the general plot of the drama, looking like inharmonious and superfluous addenda [2]. The defect of his style reaches its climax when he uses absurdly long and highly confusing compounds both in prose and verse as a great admirer of *Gauḍī* style.

BHAVABHŪTI's poetic genius finds full scope to bloom in the Uttararāmacarita where for the proper development of the plot and characterization he affected some judicious changes in the epic tale. Here again he has to cover the incidents of twelve years which has resulted in disjointed accounts. His love for the supernatural is quite apparent in URC and he does not hesitate in introducing a drama within a drama, a supernatural spectacle staged by BHARATA with the aid of heavenly nymphs. Similarly the introduction of the heavenly aerial car, like a guided missile, driven at Rāma's will can neither be staged nor could it be regarded as a suitable conveyance for the king of Ayodhyā who was so deeply attached to his people.

BHAVABHŪTI displays a better talent for characterization in the Uttararāmacarita, introducing Rāma and Sītā as an ideal couple, experienced husband and wife, conscious of their respective roles and responsibilities, as against Duśyanta and Śakuntalā, fresh and romantic creatures of the forest. The conjugal love portrayed in the play is of abiding nature though Rāma and Sītā

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[1] S. K. BELVALKAR, RĀMA's Later History or URC, Cambridge, Mass. (1915), Introduction, p. LXXII.

[2] TODAR MALL, MVC, London (1928), Introduction, p. XXXII.

are made to show that they were undergoing all the suffering for the sake of their people and not as some natural consequence of their own doings. Through the exalted characters of Rāma and Sītā, the poet effectively demonstrated the inevitability of the *Karma* doctrine, which does not spare even divinities. In conformity with Kṛṣṇa's declaration in the Bhagavadgītā [1]), the Lord assumes an earthly role whenever and wherever the virtuous are in distress. BHAVABHŪTI tries to illustrate the same message by hurling all types of suffering on Rāma and Sītā because he knows that both will emerge unscathed. For these and similar qualities BHAVABHŪTI is regarded as the poet of *Dharma* [2]).

He is entirely lacking in humour and therefore could not introduce a Vidūṣaka even in the Mālatīmādhava. Perhaps it was his temperamental inefficiency which prevented him from providing any comic relief in his plays. He loves earnestness to such an extent that very seldom a joke or any humour escapes his pen [3]). Although he was all along influenced by KĀLIDĀSA curiously enough he failed to assimilate this feature of his predecessor. WILSON's [4]) plea appears to be mere whitewashing when he says "the more deeply a man feels, the more prone he is to look at facts and the less able to humour or jest". Whatever is grand and awe-inspiring, attracts BHAVABHŪTI because it offers him scope for exaggeration. Quite frequently he indulges in unwieldy long descriptions, lamentations and sentimental demonstrations, which at times are simply disgusting. The fact is that BHAVABHŪTI suffers from the excess of his qualities, which are the qualities of a poet and not of a dramatist.

Consciously or unconsciously he imitates KĀLIDĀSA here and there. If there is any truth in the anecdote of the two dramatists meeting [5]), that only indicates that BHAVABHŪTI was considered to be a great admirer of KĀLIDĀSA. Perhaps he regarded KĀLIDĀSA as his model and ŚŪDRAKA as his rival, whom he wishes to excel in the Mālatīmādhava. In MM act III Kāmandakī refers to the love of Śakuntalā for Duśyanta and to the affection of Urvaśī for

[1]) *Bhagavadgītā*, IV, 7-8.

[2]) See L. KRETZSCHMAR, BHAVABHŪTI, *der Dichter des 'Dharma'*, Thesis Halle (1936) and R. G. HARSHÉ, *Observations sur la vie et l'œuvre de Bhavabhūti*, Thesis Paris (1938).

[3]) TODAR MALL, MVC, p. XXXII.

[4]) *Ibid.*, p. XXXIII.

[5]) BELVALKAR, URC, p. XXXIX.

Purūravas. In act IX, Mādhava intends to employ a cloud as his messenger like the *Yakṣa* in the Meghadūta [1]). Besides there are a few affinities in expression and situations which are suggestive of the influence of KĀLIDĀSA. The *dénouement* of URC resembles Śak. while act IX of MM is very much similar to act IV of Vikramorvaśī.

BHAVABHŪTI is capable of simple and graceful diction, but his love for the grandiose compels him to put high-sounding and rattling passages even in the mouth of female characters, for instance in the narrations of Madayantikā, Lavaṅgikā, Kāmandakī and Kapalakuṇḍalā in Mālatīmādhava [2]). The lamentations of Rāma and Mādhava are likewise long, tedious and unsuitable. The trouble is that what KĀLIDĀSA suggests delicately by a mere touch of his poetic brush, BHAVABHŪTI expresses in a pedantic style. The only compensating feature is his fondness for dramatic irony which he skilfully depicts in the first act of his Uttararāmacarita. He does not hesitate in repeating himself verbatim in all the plays which makes the situations look stale and commonplace [3]). However, in spite of a cumbrous style, fondness for alliterative effect and long compounds, indulgence in hyperbole, weak characterization and above all the obvious absence of any comic effect the real, the poetic merits of BHAVABHŪTI are many.

4. MURĀRI

Perhaps the author of Anargharāghava is typical of the decadent dramatists [4]), who borrowed an epic theme already attempted by BHAVABHŪTI in his two lengthy dramas and presented the same without any material change in it. Since he was confident of his poetic achievements to the detriment of the plot or theme, he did not hesitate to present another Rāma-drama. MURĀRI could have easily composed a *Kāvya* on the traditional account of RĀMA but, probably, he wanted to surpass BHAVABHŪTI with the aid of the

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[1]) For BHAVABHŪTI's indebtedness to KĀLIDĀSA see BHANDARKAR, Collected Works, II, pp. 426-27; TODAR MALL, MVC, p. XXXIX, BELVALKAR, URC, p. XL.

[2]) MM, N.S.P., edition Bombay (1982), act III, pp. 81, 90; act V, 1-6, pp. 118-22; act VI, 19; act VII pp. 186, 187, 190, 192.

[3]) For a detailed list of repetitions see TODAR MALL, MVC, pp. XL-XLIII. A large number of verses are repeated verbatim, and in parts.

[4]) DE, HSL, p. 453.

same theme. It may be assumed that BHAVABHŪTI's plays must have attracted the attention of the learned and his fame may have left MURĀRI envious if not jealous. Therefore, MURĀRI used the drama as an instrument to demonstrate his poetic skill and verbosity to the fullest advantage.

Our chronological knowledge about MURĀRI is not definite; beside his solitary drama he may have composed some other works. On the basis of references made by RATNĀKARA and MAṄKHA, it can be assumed that he probably figured towards the end of the 9th century [1]. He seems to have cited from the Uttararāmacarita, though nearly all the anthological compliments regard him as superior to BHAVABHŪTI [2]. Of his place of activity and patron we have no definite knowledge. As he refers to Māhiṣmatī as the capital of Kalachuris, it may be surmised that he lived under the patronage of some prince of this dynasty. Proud of his metrical skill and unlimited capacity to produce verses, he boasts his claims of being a *Bālavālmīki* with a self-imposed title. Beyond any doubt he possessed the gift of producing verses and therefore stuffed the seven acts of his play with no less than 540 stanzas of great length, leaving no room for action and the depiction of human sentiments. In a way he throttled the channels of smooth action, graceful diction and powerful characterization by filling the space with verses to the fullest capacity. The meagre prose in his composition is employed only for the purpose of information.

As a dramatic piece the defects of Anargharāghava are too obvious. The author had no regard for presenting a sound plot full of incidents of the epic pattern. In short he aimed at presenting a miniature Rāmāyaṇa squeezed into a play-length composition

[1]) KEITH, SD, p. 225; DE, HSL, pp. 449; 453.

[2]) The verbal resemblance mentioned by KONOW and KEITH between the prose passages URC, 30-31 and Anargharāghava I, 6-7 is not conclusive. However, MURĀRI seems to have borrowed the motif of Mālyavanta's strategy from BHAVABHŪTI's MVC. Following are some of the anthological verses which describe MURĀRI's superiority over BHAVABHŪTI. From the tone and trend of these verses it appears as if MURĀRI and his admirers were always jealous of BHAVABHŪTI:

a. *'Murāripadacintāyāṃ Bhavabhūtes tu kā kathā*
Bhavabhūtim anādṛtya Murārim urarīkuru'.

b. *'Bhavabhūtim anādṛtya nirviṇṇamatinā mayā*
Murāreḥ padacintāyām idam ādhīyate manaḥ'.

Note: there is a pun on the word *Murāri* which is also a synonym of *Viṣṇu.*

with descriptions loaded mercilessly. Hyperbole is his forte and high-sounding expressions are his passion [1]). One wonders by what standard Anargharāghava could be regarded as a drama or MURĀRI as a dramatist. No doubt BHAVABHŪTI cannot match him in extravagance and metrical skill. Therefore the anthological appreciations assessed his achievements correctly by ranking him next to MĀGHA only [2]), whose verbosity was well known.

The plot of the drama is loosely knit. The longdrawn dialogue of two disciples of Viśvamitra in act II is tedious but it enlightens the audience with the history of all the characters of the Rāmāyaṇa even before Rāma is married to Sītā. Even Sage Viśvāmitra exhibits his great fondness for high-sounding passages and narrates the charms of the famous city of Mithilā. The motif of Rāvaṇa's feud and Mālyavanta's strategies probably borrowed from BHAVABHŪTI could not be developed. The poet has no hesitation in introducing an evening scene immediately after the announcement of mid-day in act II. In fact he has no time for these small details because his objective is to regale the audience with a parade of verses, and in this he scores a great success. Though he censures his predecessors for entertaining the spectators with too much of horror, pathos, dread and wonder [3]), MURĀRI himself is guilty of introducing stereotyped characters using pompous expressions marked with hyperbole.

His strategy of employing Śūrpaṇakhā as Mantharā has no epic sanction. In act IV when after a wordy duel between Rāma and Paraśurāma a reconciliation is reached and Daśaratha expressed his intention of resigning the throne in favour of Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa brings the disguised Mantharā voicing Kaikeyī's demands which upsets the entire scheme. In act VI the details of the construction of a bridge across the ocean are discussed by two monkeys with Rāma and scenes of battle are announced through a frequent employment of voices behind the curtain or through two spies of Rāvaṇa in a tedious manner. The last act is a wonderful

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[1]) See KEITH, SD, p. 229.

[2]) In the anthological verse quoted below an admirer pays tribute to MURĀRI and MĀGHA, the masters of lexical details. Note the pun on *Murāri* and *Māgha*:

'Murāripadacintā cet tadā Māghe ratiṃ kuru
Murāripadacintā cet tadā māghe ratiṃ kuru'.

[3]) *Anargharāghava*, Prologue, pp. 3-4.

feat of MURĀRI's poetic achievement where, seated in the celestial car, Rāma and his party are made to visit all the places in heaven and on the earth. This seems to have been largely modelled on the XIIIth canto of Raghuvaṃśa or the last act of Mahāvīracarita. In this act alone MURĀRI introduces no less than 240 stanzas. Apparently he has no eye for the plot, no taste for dialogues and no regard for consistency and balanced treatment of situations.

It is no wonder that he has been quoted freely by the theorists and rhetoricians because the more one commands dramatic excellence the less he is quoted as in case of ŚŪDRAKA and VIŚĀKHADATTA. The theorists like the poets of that age were least worried about dramatic excellence. They judged the author on the platform of poetic skill alone. MURĀRI may be lacking in the qualities expected of a dramatist but he was master of lexical details and was cited by grammarians for his recondite grammatical forms [1]).

5. RĀJAŚEKHARA

If MURĀRI is guilty of producing the first typical drama of the decadent period, his immediate successor RĀJAŚEKHARA completes the picture by presenting a *Mahānāṭaka* on the same traditional theme, dramatizing the story of Rāmāyaṇa in ten long acts, in which each act reaches the dimensions of a *Nāṭikā*. As MURĀRI aimed at excelling BHAVABHŪTI, RĀJAŚEKHARA probably decided to outdo him. The author of the Anargharāghava stuffed 540 verses into a seven-act play, but the author of the Bālarāmāyaṇa composed 741 stanzas on the banal theme of Rāma. Not content with this performance, he further added a prologue of the size of another act enumerating his numerous merits in no less than 20 lengthy stanzas. Apparently, the dramatist was least worried concerning the requirements of a well-laid plot as he wanted to expand the dimensions of the play merely to demonstrate his poetic skill and also his capacity for producing elaborate descriptions.

From his boastful accounts in the prologue of Bālarāmāyaṇa and Bālabhārata it is clear that RĀJAŚEKHARA set a very high price on himself which is typical of a bad poet. He seemed to have lived in about 900 A.D. at the court of Mahendrapāla of Kānyakubja before migrating to the Kalachuri court. In the Bāla-

[1]) KEITH, SD, p. 230.

rāmāyaṇa he refers to his six works not including the two *Nāṭikās* as suggested by KEITH [1]. In addition to his tracing his descent from VĀLMĪKI, he belonged to a Kṣatriya family of *Yāyāvaras* descending from Rāma. He is equally proud of his in-laws who belonged to some leading clan of Rajput Chauhans. The playlet Karpūramañjarī is said to have been staged in honour of his wife [2]. Although RĀJAŚEKHARA is the author of four dramas which have been preserved, his best work is the Kāvyamīmāṃsā, dealing with literary traditions. Fortunately his Bālabhārata introduced by the other title of Pracaṇḍapāṇḍava [3], remained incomplete or it has survived only in two acts. Otherwise the poet would have been only too glad to produce another *Mahānāṭaka* which might have surpassed even the Bālarāmāyaṇa in proportion to the Mahābhārata story. The incomplete play even in its present form has no less than 143 ślokas.

Evidently a drama like the Bālarāmāyaṇa leaves very little space for action. Instead of creating dramatic situations and elevating the personalities of his characters, the poet makes a bold parade of spectacles, characters figuring as mere puppets without creating much of impression. His was an ingenious plan to present Rāvaṇa as a lover of Sītā; not having been attempted before [4] it needed careful handling by one adept in the art of plot construction, a merit which RĀJAŚEKHARA did not possess. Therefore, the entire space at his disposal is well stuffed with narratives and descriptions, which have little or no bearing on the smooth development of the story.

In act III of the Bālarāmāyaṇa two vultures carry on the dialogue in a monotonous strain, the male stylizing his Sanskrit. In the same act the legendary Sage BHARATA with his hundred sons is reported to have been deputed to the city of Laṅkā for staging a play based on the *'svayaṃvara'* of Sītā in Rāvaṇa's court. From the *'svayaṃvara'* the scene shifts to Mithilā and we notice Rāma fixing his gaze on the ravishing charms of Sītā. The absurdity of the scene is further enhanced by introducing Rāvaṇa peeping at Sītā from some hidden corner. He is also shown

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 232.
[2] *Karpūramañjarī*, Cambridge, Mass. (1901), I, 11, p. 11-12.
[3] *Pracaṇḍapāṇḍava*, edited by CARL CAPPELLER, Strassburg (1885).
[4] KEITH, SD, p. 233; KONOW, *Karpūramañjarī*, p. 187.

as conscious of Rāma's presence. In act III, all the Sages, the major and minor gods, celestial nymphs and all inhabitants of heaven are summoned by Nārada to witness the battle of Rāma and Paraśurāma. In act VII, monkey chiefs enlighten Rāma on the construction of a bridge and are presented as the great architects of their age. In the final act a survey of the universe is arranged on the celestial car. Thus the story of the Rāmāyaṇa is narrated in parts in most disjointed fashion where the reader is lost in unending descriptive details. The poet never hesitates to shift his scenes abruptly from one place to another as if coherence in the narrative is no responsibility of his. RĀJAŚEKHARA never let slip any opportunity to regale his readers with unending streams of descriptions in long compounds and high-sounding alliterated words.

The characterization is extremely poor. While Rāma lacks that traditional serenity, prowess, majesty and human touch as depicted by BHAVABHŪTI, he is made to look at Sītā with hungry eyes with his gaze travelling over the provoking contours of her fully developed breasts, protruding hips and other parts of her beautiful figure [1]. Infatuated at the sight he exclaims: "If this be the maidenly youth of Sītā then may it live long!" He does not hesitate to discuss these focal points of Sītā's figure with his younger brother. On the other hand instead of developing Rāvaṇa's character as a lover, the poet depicts him as a love-lorn weakling, who lurks hiding in corners withdrawing from bending the bow and moving like Purūravas of Urvaśī. The demon-king, presented as a learned devout of Śiva in the Rāmāyaṇa, at whose finger even heavens trembled in terror, is a mere vainglorious sly fellow, who occasionally is made to utter vulgar expressions, cheap, and much beneath his traditional dignity. The poet has miserably failed in filling out either of his traditional characters.

Such absurdities are visible even in the two acts of Bālabhārata which are known to us. The play opens with VYĀSA and VĀLMĪKI complimenting each other on their epic compositions. They virtually turn the stage into a mutual admiration society with VĀLMĪKI acknowledging VYĀSA's superiority since the play was based on his story. Here also the poet introduces the *'svayaṃvara'* scene

[1]) *Bālarāmāyaṇa*, III, 24.

which is not only unwieldy but pretty tedious and exasperating. This seems to have been modelled after canto VI of the Raghuvaṃśa where poor Draupadī with an attendant is made to follow a *Bandī*, an announcer, who describes the exploits of almost 30 suitors in 45 stanzas. It is doubtful if either of his plays based on epic themes was intended to be staged [1]. At best some of the portions could be enacted or recited.

Because of his flat handling, RĀJAŚEKHARA's two *Nāṭikās* would have been completely ruined but for the elements of music and dance, poetry and a few innovations giving a favourable turn to the dramatic situations [2]. His poetry lacks grace and simplicity and at times is fairly coarse. His Karpūramañjarī is important not for its dramatic qualities but for being the only surviving example of the *Saṭṭaka* variety of drama, which is a special type of dance [3]. It is not known if the type was called after the term denoting this typical dance. According to theory the *Saṭṭaka* is composed in Prākrit as acknowledged by RĀJAŚEKHARA in the prologue of the play. He confesses that the two plays are alike but as the Prākrits are known for their sweet character [4], he prefers to produce a *Saṭṭaka*. In fact he preferred the variety not for any intrinsic worth but for demonstrating his knowledge of Prākrits. In both the *Nāṭikās* he follows the same traditional formula with slight modifications here and there. Like other writers of the decadent period, he introduced the stock scenes of dawn, sun-rise, sun-set, midday, sports, pleasures of the harem and the seasons as found in Kāvyas. It is doubtful if at RĀJAŚEKHARA's time people still enjoyed the staging of a Sanskrit play much less a Prākrit play. According to KONOW [5], Karpūramañjarī is important for the history of dramatic literature as it retains a '*sthāpaka*' instead of a '*sūtradhāra*', the former having disappeared from the earlier Sanskrit plays. WINTERNITZ [6] regards Karpūramañjarī as the comedy of the Sanskrit literature. However he also considers RĀJAŚEKHARA a master of artificial language rather than a drama-

1) *Pracaṇḍapāṇḍava* is said to have been presented at Kannauja before Mahendrapāla: KONOW, *Karpūramañjarī*, p. 188.

2) DE, HSL, p. 458.

3) KONOW, *Karpūra.*, pp. 195-96.

4) *Ibid.*, I, 7.

5) *Ibid.*, p. 196; see also KEITH, SD, p. 239.

6) M. WINTERNITZ, *Geschichte der indischen Literatur*, III, p. 240.

tist. In dedicating the *Saṭṭaka* to his wife he departed from the general practice; this may be regarded as an indication that the play was composed before RĀJAŚEKHARA moved to any royal court.

In plot construction and general treatment Viddhaśālabhañjikā fares better, though it is influenced by HARṢA's Ratnāvalī. The dramatist has made use of a better ruse in deceiving the queen by ushering in a girl dressed in the garb of a boy as it heightens the effect of the sentiment of wonder. The plot is poorly developed and the characters introduced are stereotyped and feeble. The statue-dance from which the play takes its title is ineffectively portrayed. It is a strange play in which the heroine appears on the stage in the middle of the third act[1]). A puerile joke through which the queen wants to chastise the king by marrying him to a boy is finally turned into a reality which makes a demand of uncommon credulity.

Obviously RĀJAŚEKHARA suffers from many blemishes. But as he appeared on the horizon when emphasis was not on the flavour but on the style and diction, he never cared for distinguishing his dramas from the Kāvya style in vogue. His characters are weak and lifeless. As compared to the gay and gallant Vatsa, Vidyādharamalla appears stiff and uninteresting. The queen lacks the majesty and grace of Vāsavadattā. The heroines have no personality as if they were introduced to be presented to the king without any show of sentiment. The Vidūṣaka in Karpūramañjarī is tedious and hopeless but CĀRĀYAṆA in Viddhaśālabhañjikā has considerable worth [2]). RĀJAŚEKHARA's knowledge of Prākrits appears to be doubtful as he fails to distinguish between *Śaurasenī* and *Māgadhī*. The most striking feature of his Prākrits is seen in a profuse use of native words which is indicative of the growing influence of the vernaculars [3]). His frequent use of *Marāthī* words does not speak well of his knowledge of Prākrits.

There is no dearth of instances to show that he repeats himself [4]), a feature shared with BHAVABHŪTI. His verses are readable but seldom touching and deep. All his works are influenced by KĀLI-

[1]) DE, HSL, p. 459.
[2]) J. T. PARIKH, *Sanskrit Comic Characters*, Sūrat (1952), pp. 66-70.
[3]) KONOW, *Karpūra.*, p. 199.
[4]) *Ibid.*, p. 206. CAPPELLER has also given a long list of repetitions. KONOW's list is not exhaustive.

DĀSA, HARṢA, BHAVABHŪTI and perhaps even by MURĀRI [1]), but he fails to improve his style and diction because he considered himself more competent than his predecessors.

6. KṚṢṆAMIŚRA

With MURĀRI and RĀJAŚEKHARA the Sanskrit drama passes into its age of decadence from which it could never extricate itself. However, one of the traits of decadence is traceable even in the earliest plays of AŚVAGHOṢA in which for the first time the philosophy of the Buddhist faith is dramatized through a number of allegorical characters. Fortunately the type failed to inspire any followers till the second half of the eleventh century when KṚṢṆAMIŚRA took up the line and composed a play with the title of Prabodhacandrodaya to illustrate his doctrinal thesis with the aid of abstract ideas and symbols. It is not known if the author revived an old lingering tradition [2]) or set a new trend of his own which resembled the English Morality plays without having their wide and deep influence [3]). Whatever be the actual state of affairs the credit of composing the first allegorical play goes to KṚṢṆAMIŚRA. The play was produced for Gopāla in the presence of the Chandela king Kīrtivarman of Jejākabhukti towards the end of the eleventh century [4]). The drama as it is seeks to establish the *'advaita'* form of Viṣṇu-bhakti between *Vedānta* and Viṣṇuism. Though the tendency is hardly commendable the Prabodhacandrodaya has its own merits.

KṚṢṆAMIŚRA composed this play at a period when the religious atmosphere in India was in a chaotic condition. Buddhism and Jainism had demoralised to a great extent, and various forms of Hinduism were unsuccessful in inspiring confidence among the people. Rising above class distinctions several religious leaders from the lower ranks gave a new interpretation to the old beliefs and contributed to the revival of the *Bhakti* movement. Therefore

[1]) KONOW, *Karpūra.*, p. 187; V. S. APTE, RĀJAŚEKHARA: *His life and writings*, Poona (1886), pp. 35-38. In addition to the above, *Bālarāmāyaṇa* IV, 53-44 are obvious imitations of *Śak.*, IV, 17. Also see KEITH, SD, p. 239; DE, HSL, p. 459. Regarding PISCHEL's estimate of RĀJAŚEKHARA see *Karpūra.*, p. 204.

[2]) KEITH, SD, p. 251.

[3]) DE, HSL, p. 479.

[4]) *Ibid.*, p. 481; KEITH, SD, p. 251.

KṚṢṆAMIŚRA's play gives useful information about the fading face of the Buddhist and Jain faiths, demoralisation of *Paṇḍitas* in Banaras, the orgies in which monks participated, the existence of certain sects allowing the slaughtering of animals, the scenes of gambling and chessplaying [1]. With such abstract ideas of an essentially religious and philosophical nature, it is difficult to produce a play of any real interest, though it could afford interesting reading [2]. The tendency of dramatizing the abstract themes came when the epic episodes were exploited to the full and the life around could not inspire the dramatist. Therefore in spite of the simple Sanskrit which is free from the artificialities of the age, the commendable grasp of dramatic art and even the ingenuity of the plot the author could not possibly turn the abstract ideas into living beings. However, the allegorical trend started by KṚṢṆAMIŚRA was followed by some later writers out of which 'Mohaparājaya' of YAŚAPĀLA and 'Caitanyacandrodaya' of KARṆAPŪRA achieved some success [3].

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1) JAGIRDAR, DSL, pp. 155-56; KEITH, SD, p. 253.
2) DE, HSL, p. 483.
3) KEITH, SD, p. 253; DE, HSL, pp. 484-86.

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